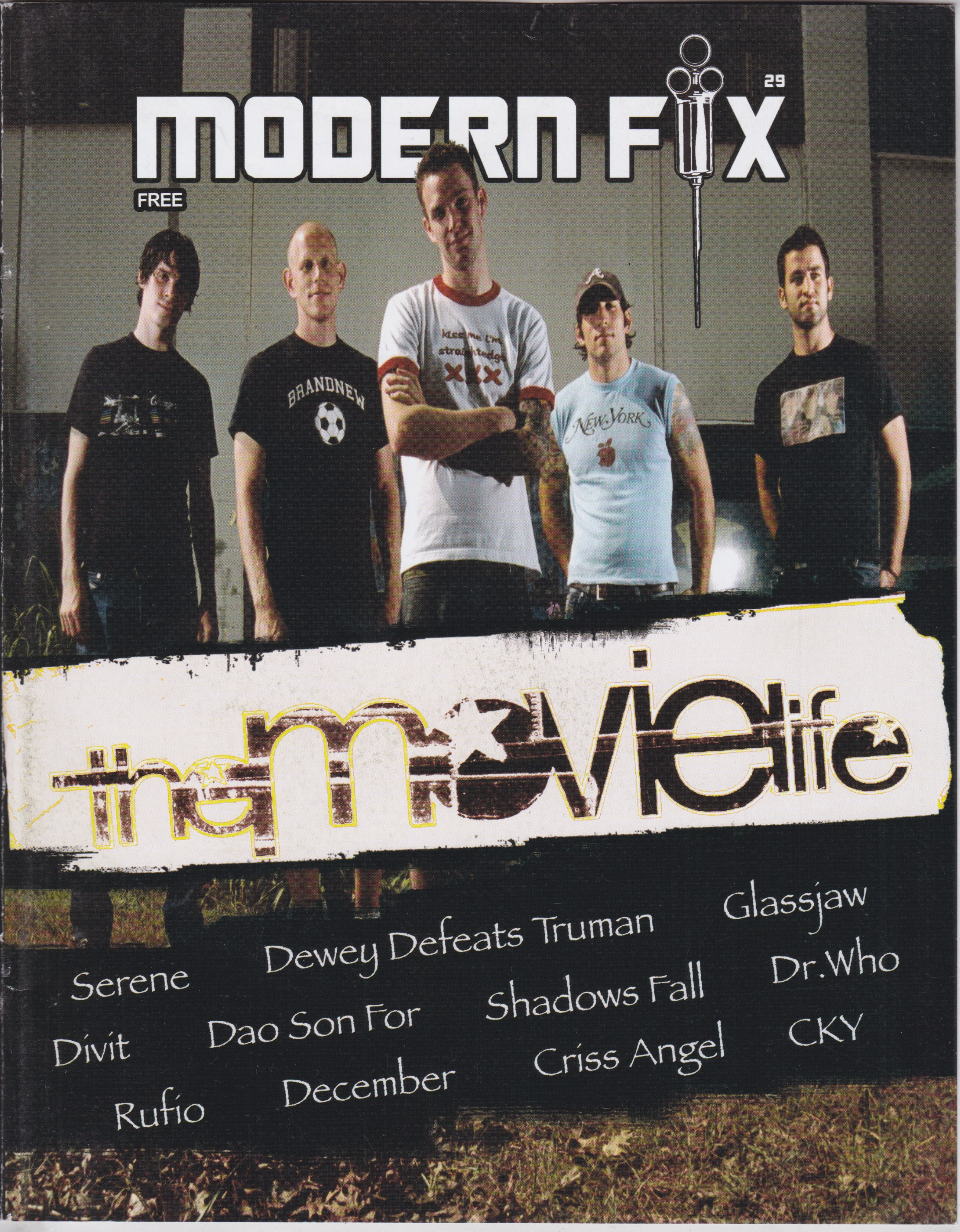
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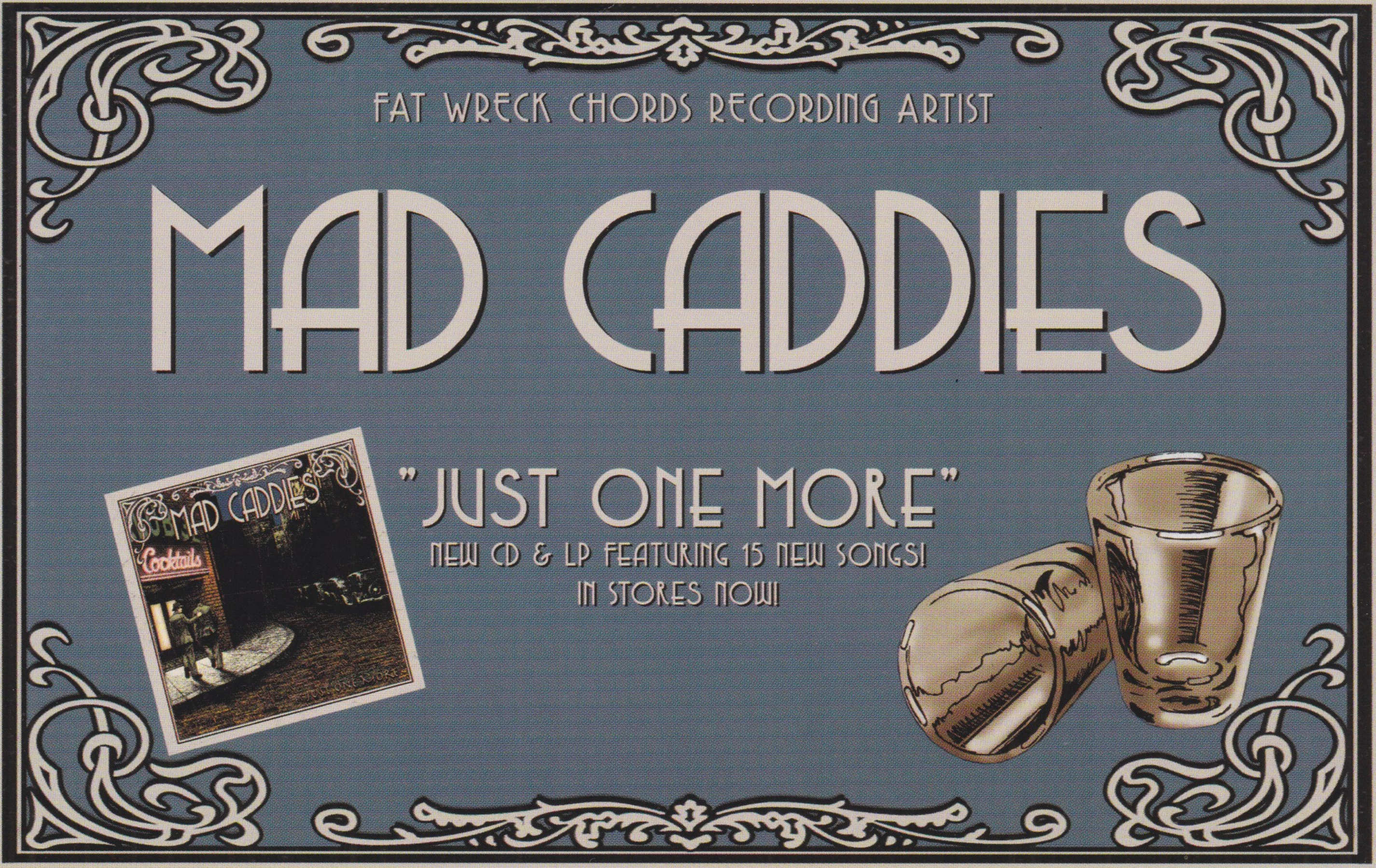

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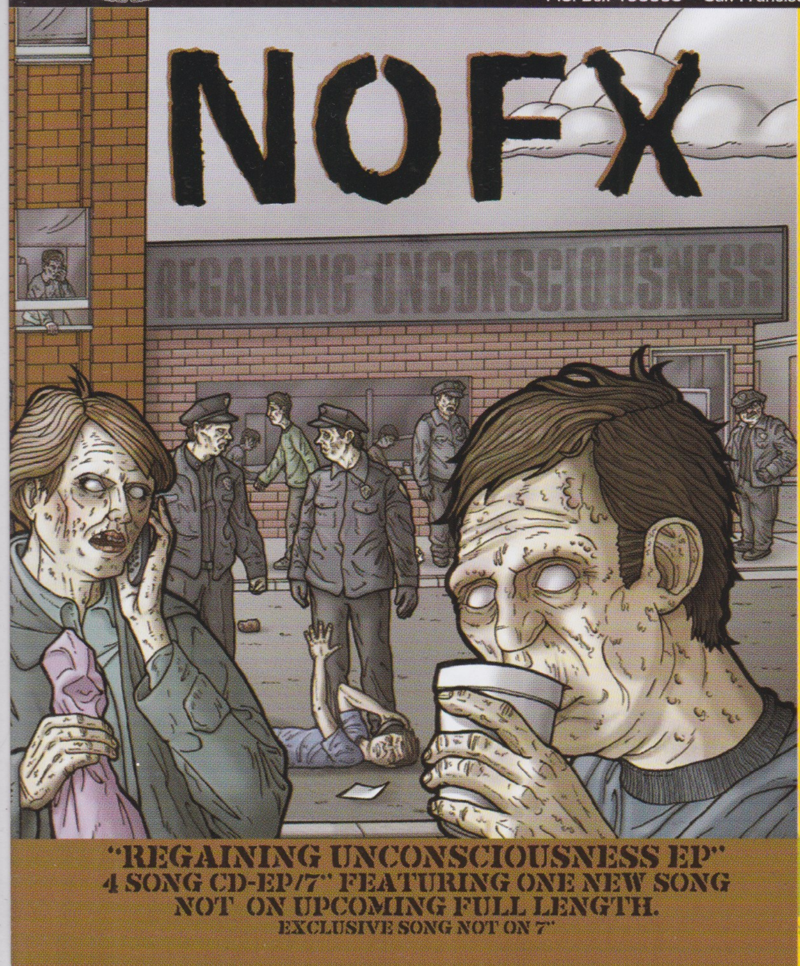

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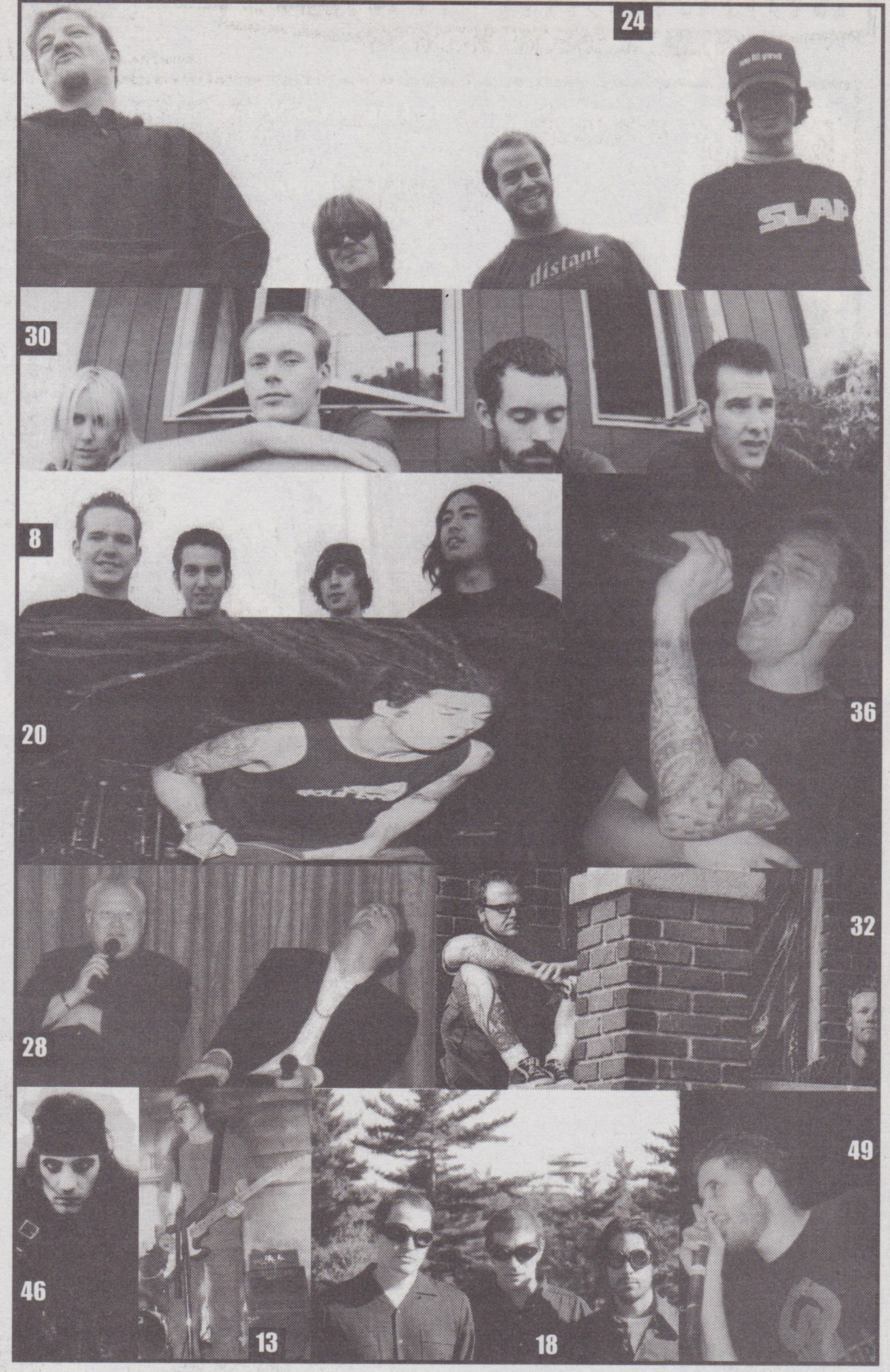

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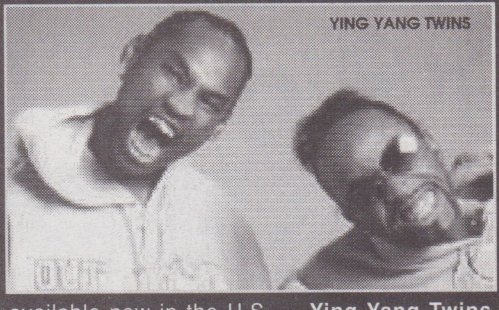
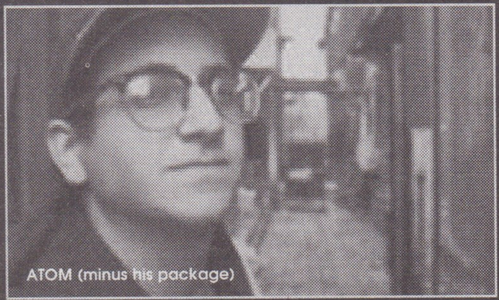
Cattle Decapitation has just been added to the line up of a Bay Area Thrash Festival taking place in San Francisco on Saturday, March 29, 2003 at the Avalon Ballroom.

CATTLE DECAPITATION

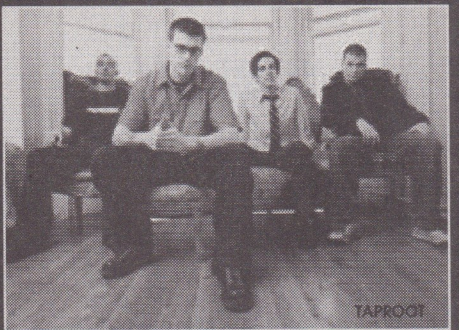
The confirmed line up so far is: **Halford**, **Testament**, **Death Angel**, **Vio-lence**, **Exhumed**, **Cattle Decapitation**, **Impaled**. The band will begin filming their music video for the title track of their last "To Serve Man" in March... Sweden's **Soilwork** have completed work on their newest "Figure Number Five". Nuclear Blast America has set the release date for North America as May 6th, 2003, two weeks after the April 21st European release... The Swedish quintet **Andromeda** are about to unleash their second full-length recording, "II=I". This is the first album to feature new vocalist *David Fremberg*... **Behemoth** are about to make their first U.S. appearance at this year's March Metal Meltdown and will then head out on a full tour with **Deicide** and **Amon Amarth** throughout the U.S... **Kataklysm** are ready to storm America for their first tour in support of the excellent "Shadows & Dust". The tour kicks off on Valentines Day in Louisiana. **Hate Eternal**, **Dying Fetus** and **Into Eternity** round out the bill... **M.O.D.**'s new record, "Rebel You Love to Hate", is finally mixed and mastered. *Billy "Buzzard" Milano* and *Dan Korneff* mixed it at Watermusic in Hoboken, NJ. Following the release of the album (tentatively scheduled for June), M.O.D. will tour as part of the "Killith-Fair" both in America and Europe... Chinchilla just finished recordings for their fourth album, "Madtropolis" in the House Of Music Studios, Germany. Produced by the band and Achim Köhler, legendary ex-**Motorhead** guitar player *Fast Eddie Clarke* played an awesome solo for the song "When The Sand Darkens The Sun" when he visited the band in the studio... Florida indie pop rock outfit **The Rocking Horse Winner** has announced plans to tour with The Remedy Session and will be followed by additional dates with **Coheed & Cambria**, **Onelinedrawing** and **Hopesfall** beginning February 18th... The North American Fat Tour begins in late February and the lineup is gonna be **The Mad Caddies**, **Rise Against**, **The Real McKenzies**, and **The Flipsides**. Soon after, the European Fat Tour kicks off with the mighty **Lawrence Arms** taking the place of the equally mighty **Real McKenzies**... **North Side Kings** have just been confirmed to accompany Soulfly on their European tour in February. Their most recent offering, "A Family Affair" is


YING YANG TWINS

available now in the U.S.... **Ying Yang Twins**, one of the South's most prominent party-starting Hip-Hop groups, and their producer/label head *Michael "DJ Smurf" Crooms*, President of Collipark Records, have signed a long-term deal with TVT Records. The duo, comprised of *D-Roc* and *Kaine*, will follow-up last years 400,000 unit seller, "Alley: The Return of the Ying Yang Twins"... Earache is proud to announce after many long years, and constant pleas from fans, they are now offering **Carcass**' first two albums - "Reek Of Putrefaction" and


ATOM (minus his package)

"Symphonies Of Sickness" - on CD with the original, banned cover art. These extreme collages of gore have been unavailable since 1992 - replaced in the meantime by the green and purple censored covers that have saturated the market. Any fan of the music knows the original "gore covers" were the only real covers these albums ever had... The new album from Erie, PA's **x.Disciple.x A.D.** is finished and slated for an early April release. Picking up where 2000's "Heaven And Hell" left off, the boys bring it with 11 blistering tracks of hardcore / metal fury. In other words, this shit makes **P.O.D.** sound like **Jewel**. The band will be playing Facedown Fest in California as well as selected one-off dates before embarking on a tour later this year... **Atom and his Package** held a contest where one lucky winner from ww.hopeless-

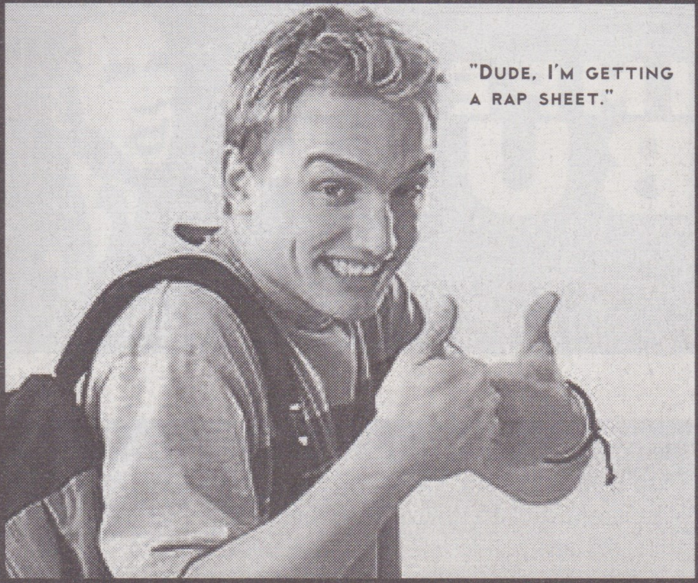

TAPROOT

records.com will won a song recorded just for them. Keep an eye on website for the winner and the song... *Shavo Odadjian*, bassist for the multi-platinum band **System of A Down**, will step behind the camera when he writes and directs the music video for **Taproot**'s next single, "Mine," from their near-Gold album, "Welcome". "Mine" will be the third video that *Odadjian* has written and directed. *Odadjian* helmed **System of a Down**'s "Toxicity" and "Aerials" videos, both of which were MTV staples for months... **(hed)pe** have a new album and single on the way, both entitled "Blackout". Someone needs to tell them **The Scorpions** already have an album and song title of that name... The former members of **Guns n' Roses** guitarist *Slash*, bassist *Duff McKagan*, drummer *Matt Sorum* and newcomer guitarist *Dave Cushner* are holding tryouts in Los Angeles to replace *Axl Rose*, who splintered the original combo in the Nineties, and VH1 is filming the proceedings for a new show. The band had placed ads in everything from local circulars to Rolling Stone, reading, according to Slash, "Unnamed artist looking for singer-songwriter somewhere in the realm of early *Alice Cooper/Steve Tyler*, the harder-edged side of *McCartney* and *Lennon*." After receiving around 500 demos, the band has made it through

SHADOWS FALL

around 15 auditions including **Skid Row** frontman *Sebastian Bach*. Since Axl's attempt at GNR 2003 was a pathetic joke, perhaps the real guts of GNR, the music, can shine on through this incarnation. Seriously, when did Axl Rose become such a joke? (Oh yeah, after that shameful display of "Paradise City" on the MTV Video Music Awards). Or maybe it was around that "November Rain" ego fest... Underground heroes **O.A.R.** have inked a multi-album recording contract with Lava Records, home of Kid Rock, Uncle Kracker,

Simple Plan, Unwritten Law and Trans Siberian Orchestra. The band is currently holed-up in the studio with producer *John Alagia* (**Dave Matthews**, **John Mayer**) recording their new studio album "In Between Now And Then"... **Shadows Fall** recently opened a live video shoot to their fans. This is the second video off of their latest release, "The Art Of Balance" and will showcase the band in an explosive live setting. The shoot took place in their hometown at the Fat Cat in Springfield Ma. "Destroyer Of Senses" will be directed by *Zack Merek* (**Converge**, **Atreyu**) and is set to feature guest appearances by members of **Hatebreed**, **Lamb Of God** and **Converge** among many others.... **Rival Schools** frontman *Walter Schreifels* recently produced **Rebecca Schiffman**'s upcoming new album "Upside Down Lacrimosa" which will see a release through Some Records on May 6th. In addition to producing the outing *Schreifels* also played drums, bass, guitar and banjo on a number of the tracks. At present *Schreifels* is working on the upcoming new **Rival Schools** album which will see a release through Island/Def Jam this summer/fall... In a posting on their official website www.vexred.com, **Vex Red** have officially announced the departure of their vocalist/guitarist *Terry Abbott.* The quick statement goes on to say that the remaining members of the band plan to continue playing together. Rumors of Abbott's departure from the group have been swirling for weeks with talk of Abbott working on a new project with guidance from producer **Ross Robinson** (**Glassjaw**, **Korn**) being the hottest topic... Actor *Benjamin Curtis,* the Dell Computer Corp. pitchman "Steven" who says on television, "Dude, yer gettin' a Dell," was arrested for possessing marijuana recently in New York. Curtis, 22, was charged with criminal possession of marijuana, a misdemeanor that carries a prison sentence of up to three months if he is convicted, a spokesman for the Manhattan district attorney's office said. Curtis, who lives in New York and was arrested on a Sunday night, and was scheduled to appear in Manhattan Criminal Court later on the following Monday. A spokesman for the Round Rock, Texas-based Dell said he was not familiar with the details and declined to speculate on future plans for the advertising campaign. "We're following the situation closely and working with our ad agency to understand what's transpired here," spokesman Venancio Figueroa said. The ad agency is DDB of Chicago. Dell, the No. 2 personal computer company, makes most of its money selling to businesses and schools. It began the TV and print commercials featuring the wise-cracking "Steven" three years ago.



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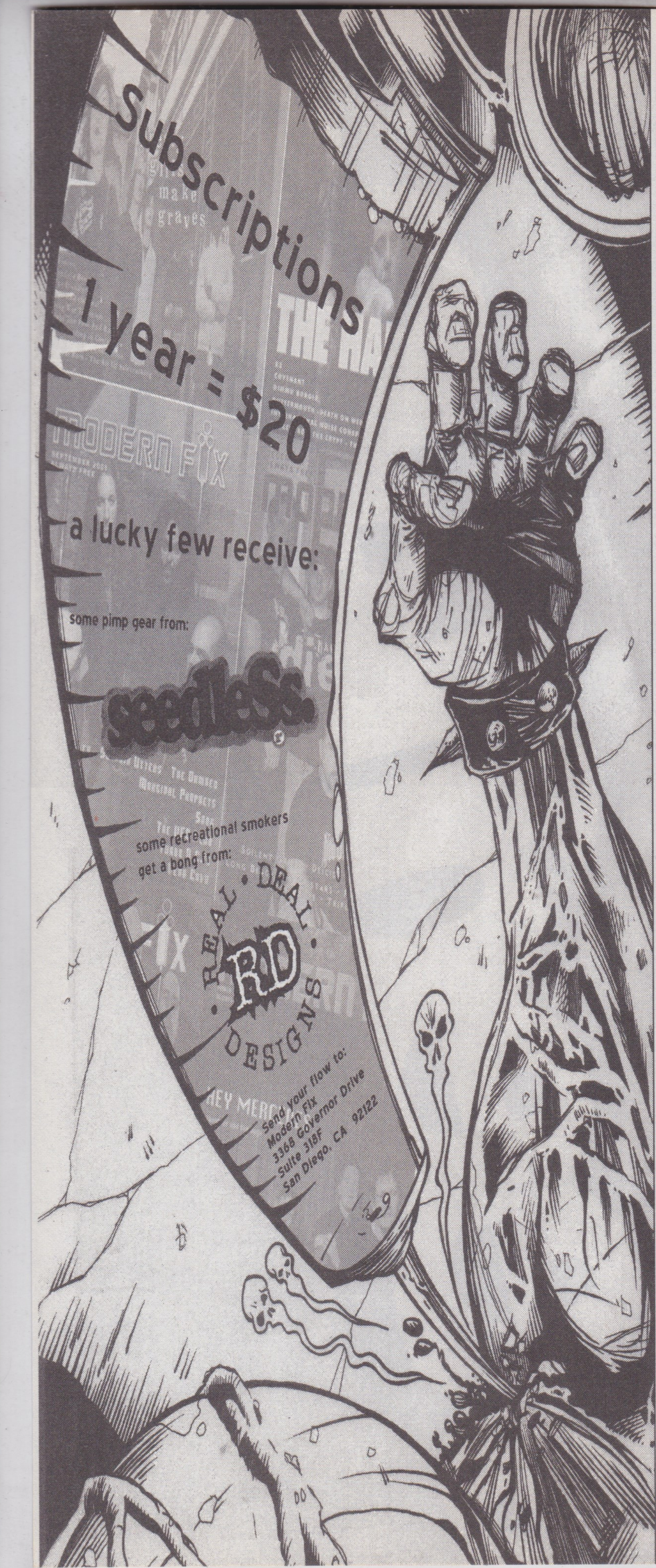

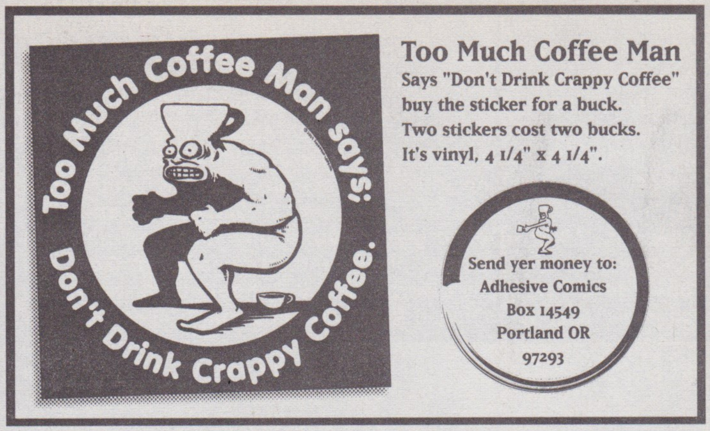

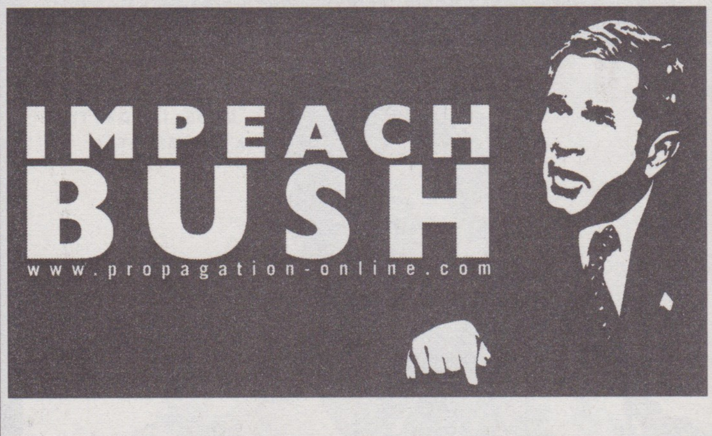

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an interview

with

rufio

by kelli skye

photo by kris stencel

So there's a story of fairies in Never Never Land, but it has absolutely nothing to do with this article - or as we find, the band Rufio. Gearing up to release an in-between albums EP in late February, Rufio are busy recording the tracks for their June full-length release, and preparing for the spring/summer tour schedule. Recently, singer/guitarist Scott Sellers had a few moments to chat with me about their upcoming endeavors, among other random topics.

Kelli Skye: Hello? Can you hear me now?
Scott: Yeah.
So, Scott, what are you guys doing right this minute?
We're in the studio recording for our next full length.
And when is that due out?
It's due out in mid-June. In early summer, or somewhere around there. We have an EP coming out in February, so we're just waiting around for that.
What sets Rufio apart from every other band?
Honestly, I have no clue. But (laughs hysterically) we're trying not to make stuff so simple. We're trying to write songs with actual parts to them rather than just playing power chords the whole time. In some aspects we're the same, and in some we're different.
Why is your band named Rufio?
Our bands name is Rufio, I don't know because it sounded...neat. One of our friends down the street was going to name his band Rufio and we stole it. So there's no story behind it we just liked it, and we stole it. And all those pixies in Peter Pan.
Why did you decide to release the EP that's coming out?
Why!? Because it's been two years since we've released anything so we wanted something we could put up on the Internet and just put something out while we wait for the new album to come out.
Okay, what can we expect from the new album?
Lots and lots of hidden porn...no, it's pretty much the same stuff but it's more of a mature sound, to us. The other CD sounds cheesy to us now. It's something more solid to us, rather than stupid little...cheesy stuff.
So do you have any touring or show plans right now?
(to the rest of the band) "Hey guys! Am I allowed to talk about shows right now?" Okay, well we're doing three weeks on Warped Tour this summer. We're also doing another tour starting in April...am I allowed to talk about that? Okay, we're going on tour with *Lagwagon* and *Hot Water Music,* and the first week is with *Millencolin.* I'm excited.
Who do you think is hotter, *Avril Lavigne* or *Pink*?
Pink! Pink's body is like a male; I'm down with Pink. Mike and me are down with Pink and Clark is down with Avril.
Is there anything else you'd like to say?
I really don't know. We've got nothing. We're idiots!

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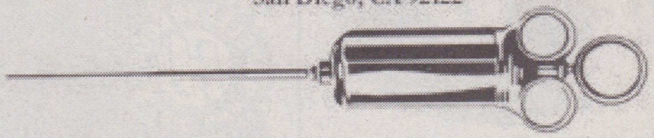

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DEATHWISH

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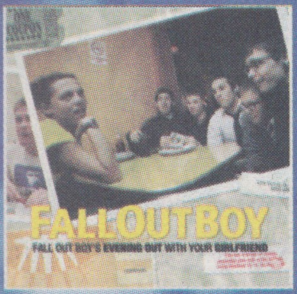

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"THE ROMANCE OF HELEN TRENT"

This Chicago band, which features Tim Mcrilith of Rise Against, delivers a powerful and gripping debut full length. Forged from erie, emotive dynamics and an intriguing blend of melody and metallic riffage, this band draws wide comparisons from Guilt to At The Drive In to Stretch Armstrong.

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ROBOTIC EMPIRE

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"THE NOW"

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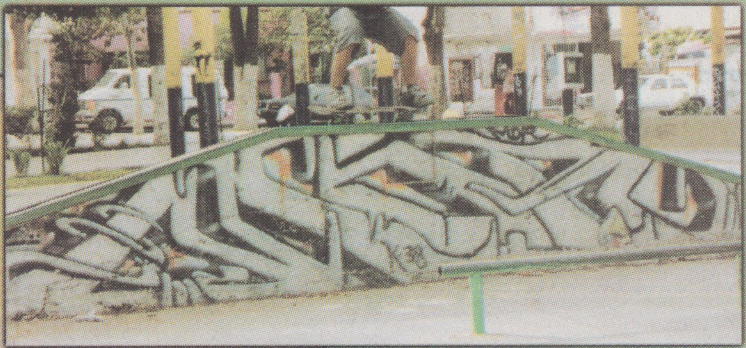
THE GRAFF PAGE ...goes to Tijuana

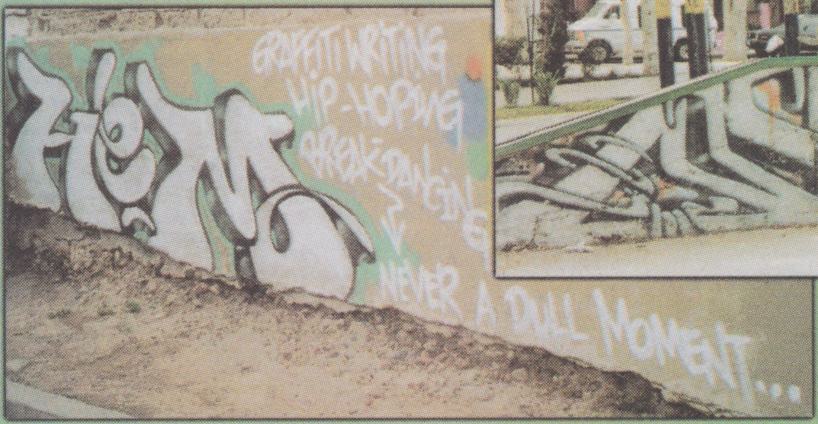
words and flix by m. young

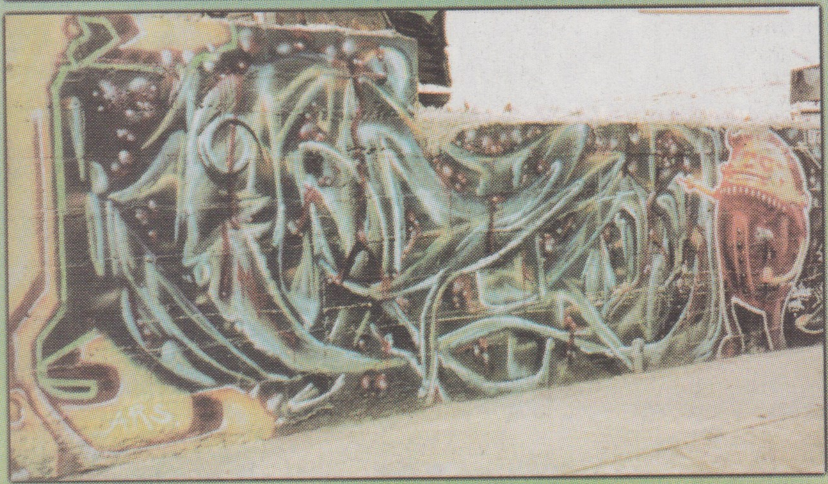
Recently a friend and I took a trip down to the bustling metropolis of Tijuana in an attempt to glimpse further into the multicultural and international world of graffiti art. Similar to major cities throughout the world this Mexican border town also has a thriving and unique underground culture. Armed with my trusty camera and some money for tacos we set off on foot to fulfill our graffiti related purpose. Crossing the international border we entered the vast city and immediately began spotting evidence of graffiti everywhere. We spent all afternoon searching the urban landscape followed by a night of drunken madness before we had to return home again. Other cool aspects of this particular Graff Page expedition included meeting a local artist who had his own studio/gallery downtown and coming across an outdoor skatepark where the kids ripped just as hard as anywhere else.

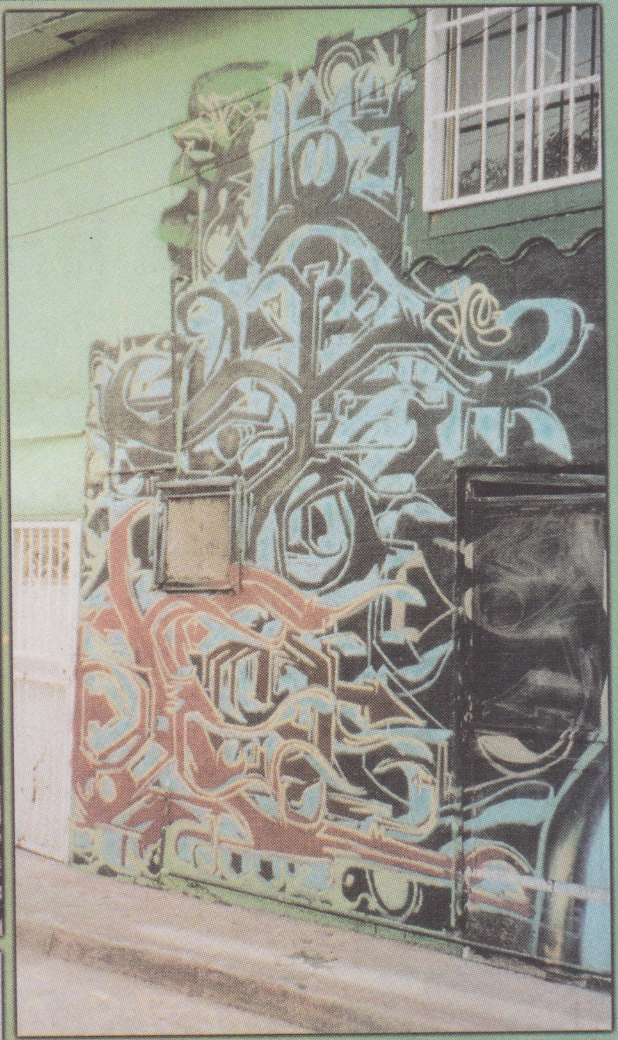
Attention Writers! ***After one year in existence, the Graff Page is still running strong due to all the reader support and correspondence it has received. Help keep it going by continuing to send shit in!***

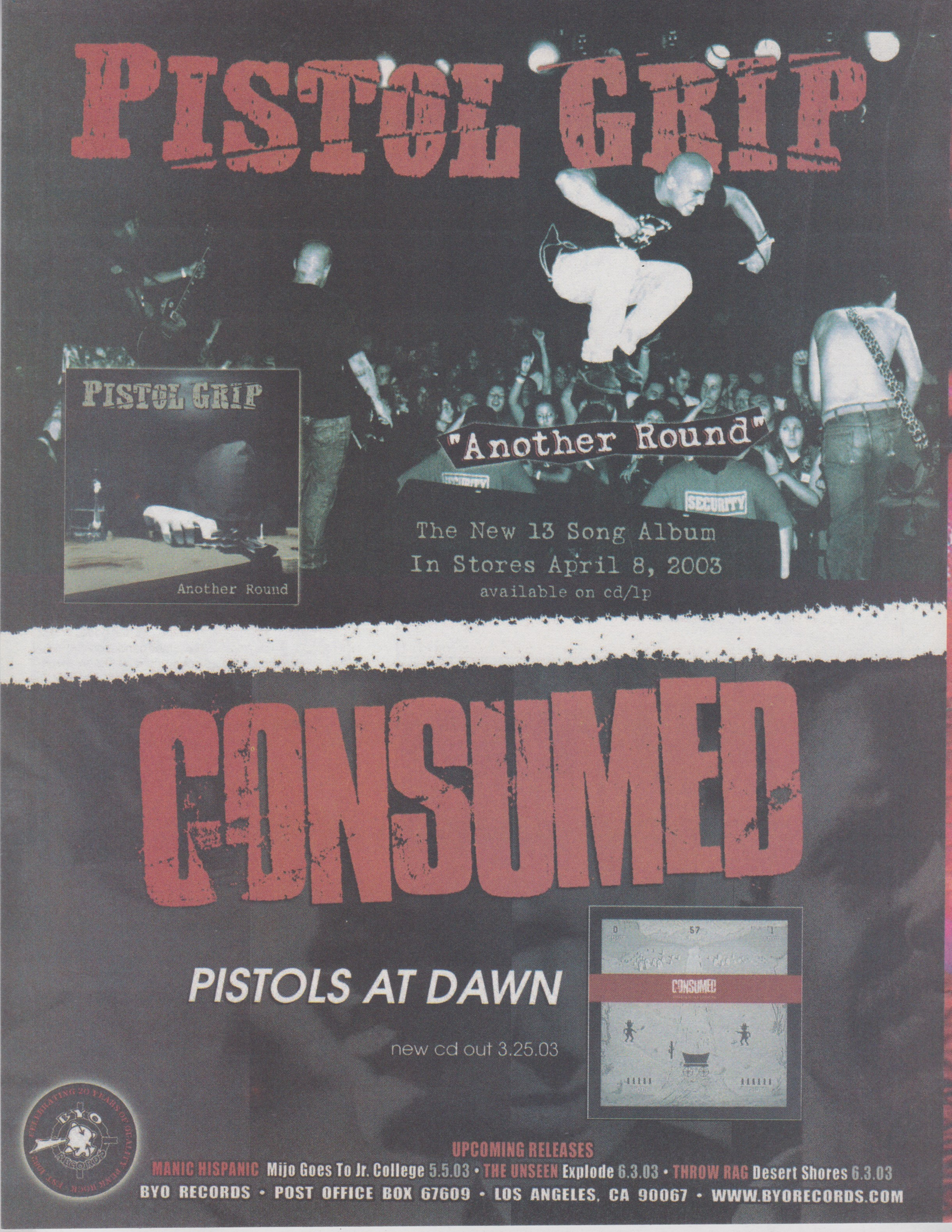
Our address: ***3368 Governor Dr. #318, SD, CA 92122***







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dewey defeats truman

by tom maxWell

IN THE end it's just another ego & one more IdIOT THAt can't make a tour

Being involved with a band's meager beginnings can be a very rewarding experience. Here at the Fix we've seen a number of our "babies" grow up right in front of our eyes. Poised to be a hell of a find, dewey defeats truman are making a name for themselves all around the world, but are sparsely known at home. The band's most recent release "the road to nowhere maps e.p." is a robust indie rock record with big hooks and really reminds me why I like the guitar so much. Also, the vocal harmonies are pretty fucking insane and really get me singing along. One of the best new bands around lives in your backyard and you probably didn't even know it!!! These questions were answered by James Reader who's credits include bass and vocals in the band.

Tom: For those readers that haven't heard your band, how would you describe it to them?
James: What? Your readers haven't heard of the band? What the fuck, man? No, I'm kidding. Well, we're an indie rock band. Yeah, we have shades of emo in us, but we don't see that as such a bad thing. We get compared to everyone from Superchunk to the Get Up Kids. The Get Up Kids thing we find odd. We get a LOT of that. Frankly, we just don't see it.

It's been a while since your last release "the road to nowhere maps." Was the response everything you hoped it would be?
Man, I'd have to say it was better. Overall, the reviews were great, and we got a ton of them from coast to coast. We also got press in England, Scotland, Australia, Spain, Germany, Japan, Indonesia, France, shit, all over. Which is great, because now we get fan mail from all over the world. It's a kick when someone in Russia or Japan writes: "Hello, I am liking to the band of great." Hehe. But really, that's what it's all about. And you know, when we did our SXSW tour last March, we had lots of write-ups and blurbs in cities we played, which really helped our draws, even into the Midwest. So yeah, our label (Has Anyone Ever Told You?) did a great job with the E.P.

So your focus is on keeping it an organic three piece. Is there any reason for not using more instruments and experimentation?
I think at first that was a reaction to the fact that keyboards were suddenly everywhere, and being used as featured instruments. We didn't want that, and to date we haven't used keyboards at all. But that could change. And you know, it seems like every year we discuss adding a second guitar player, because there's just so much more you can do. But, in the end, it's just another ego, and one more idiot that can't make a tour. So, we stay a trio. Why, do you play guitar?

Are you kidding, I sure do! So in the future you plan on changing it up a lot or keeping the sound fairly similar?
Well, right now we're definitely looking to grow as band, and that would include exploring new types of instrumentation when we record, recording techniques, song structures and arrangements, that sort of thing.

You guys have been part of the local San Diego scene for quite some time now. Do you feel like you've established a fairly large core following in the nation's "finest city?"
Boy, that's a loaded question. We simply don't play here enough. Honestly, we're not big scenesters anymore, so we don't "hang out," and have any kinships with other San Diego bands, for the most part. So, we don't really have much of a draw at all. It's actually twice as good or better, in other cites. We've talked about moving to Lawrence, or Omaha, where bands are much more supportive of each other, and everyone's so nice. But fuck, let's get real. They get all this powdery white shit all over the ground, and it gets very cold. And they don't have beaches, either. What's up with that?

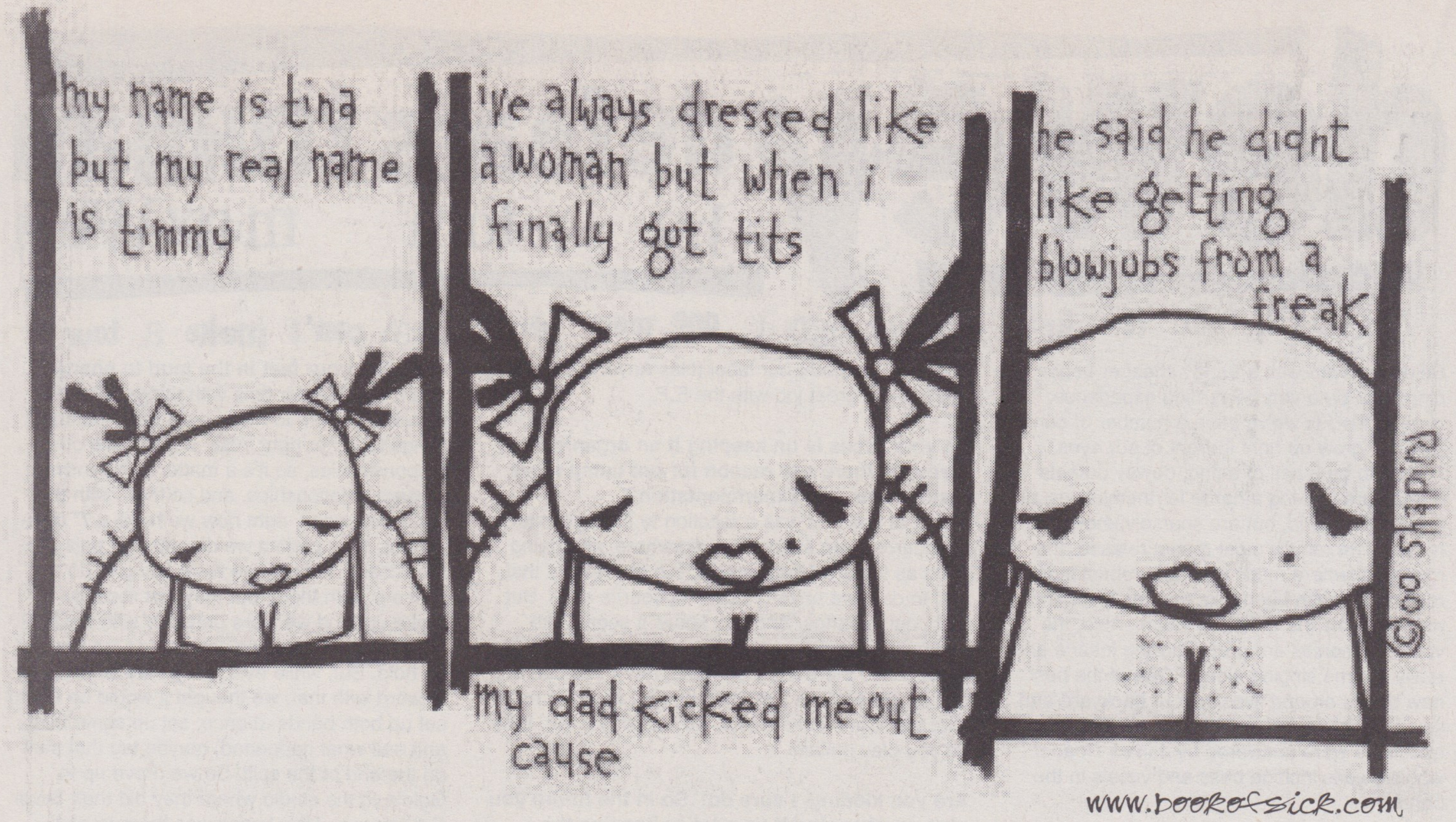
What's next on the agenda for dewey defeats truman? Six years and two albums (with a split 10" with San Diego's Slowcoach in early 2003) is not very much production, but what you have done has been very good. Do you expect this dragging your feet in the mud to change?
Yeah, we take our time with things, I'll admit that. But we like to make sure we're putting things together right. Also, we all have other responsibilities, so it's a matter of balancing careers, relationships, and so forth, with the band. And yeah, right now we have a 7" coming out, it's a project we did with our pals Slowcoach. Initially, we were going to do a split e.p. with them, but they just recently broke up, and we were unhappy with the final mixes of the songs we contributed, so that's on hold. But, while everything was still moving forward with that, we thought it would be fun to set up both bands at once, set up some mics, and see what happened, maybe tag that stuff on the end of the split. So we drove up to Goleta to the studio where they did their Silver Girl release. John Lyons was there to engineer, so while he was setting up the mics and getting the tones right, we just all started fucking around. Two drummer, two bass players, and two guitarists. By the time he was ready to roll tape, we had a few ideas, so we just told him "Let it roll," and did these songs on the first takes. They came out real good, and they didn't sound like either band, so after the whole project was put on hold, we knew these songs had captured something and agreed to release them. The upcoming 7" are those two songs. I think we're going to call it "The Bitters." Beyond that, we just started writing again, and will have another full-length out sometime this year.

If you could change one thing about the American music scene what would it be and why?
That's easy. I'd end Corporate radio. That would change things in a hurry, wouldn't it? And, as an added bonus, we'd never have to hear Creed again...

Hope you don't piss anyone off, but what is your favorite venue?
In San Diego, that would be the Casbah, hands down. Great sound, and free Jager.

Serving the remainder of Roosevelt's term and reelected for a second, Harry S. Truman, the first world leader to employ atomic weapons died December 26th, 1972 at the age of 88.

"Now just because I'm dead, don't you Japanese go thinkin' nothing tricky." -Truman's ghost


my name is tina
but my real name
is timmy
ive always dressed like
a woman but when i
finally got tits
my dad kicked me out
cause
he said he didnt
like getting
blowjobs from a
freak
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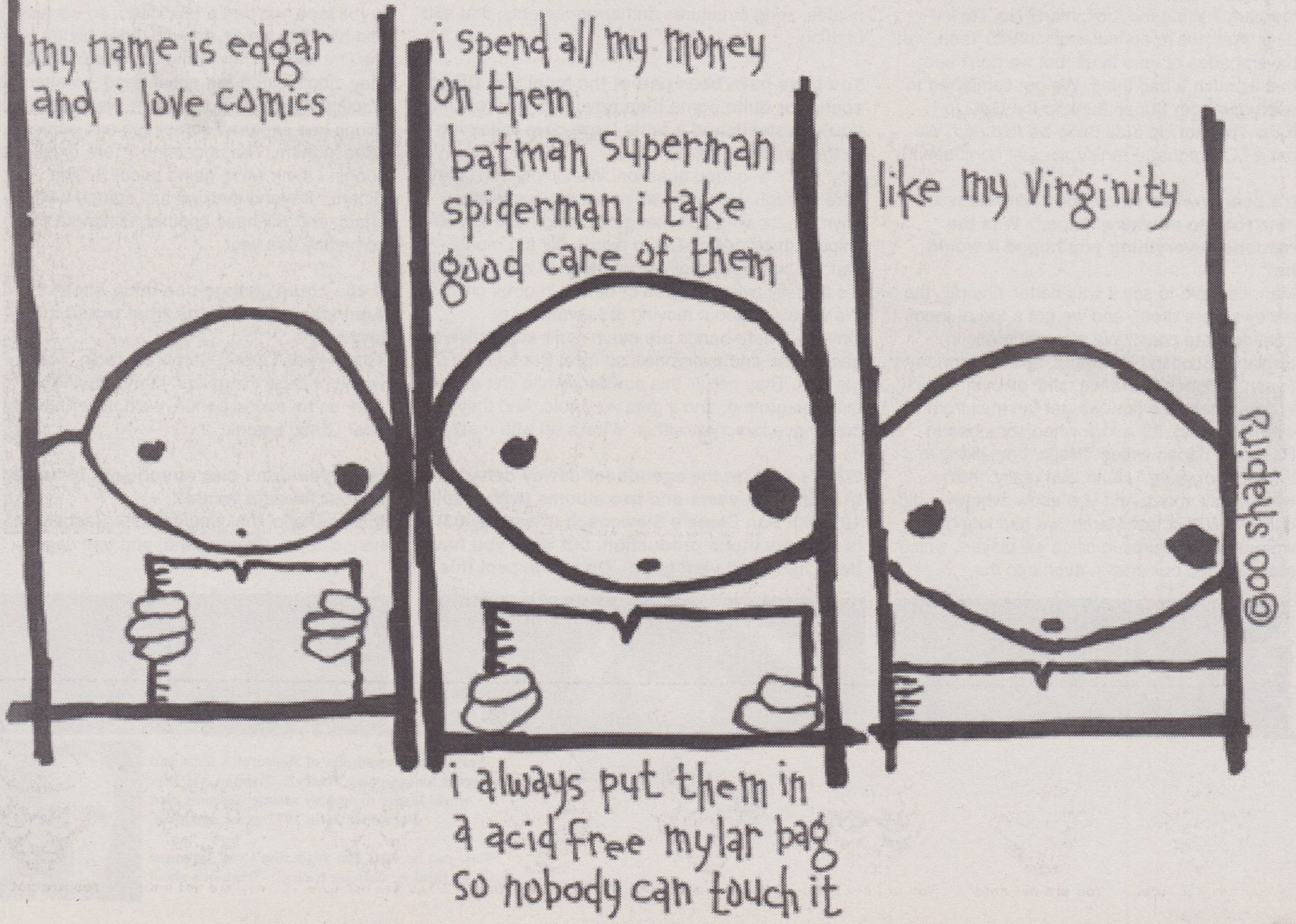
my name is edgar
and i love comics
i spend all my money
on them
batman superman
spiderman i take
good care of them
i always put them in
a acid free mylar bag
so nobody can touch it
like my virginity
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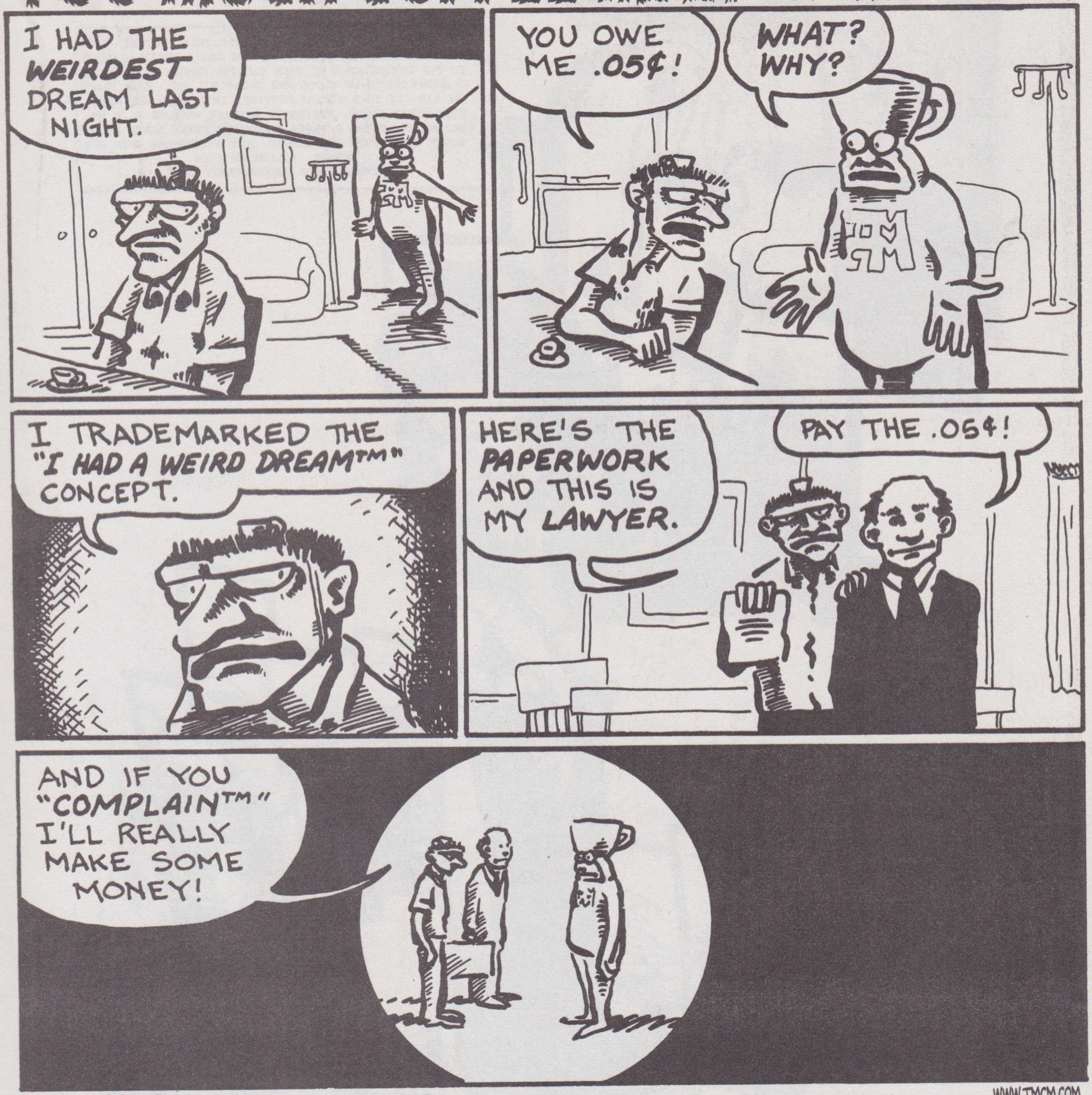
TOO MUCH COFFEE MAN BY SHANNON WHEELER



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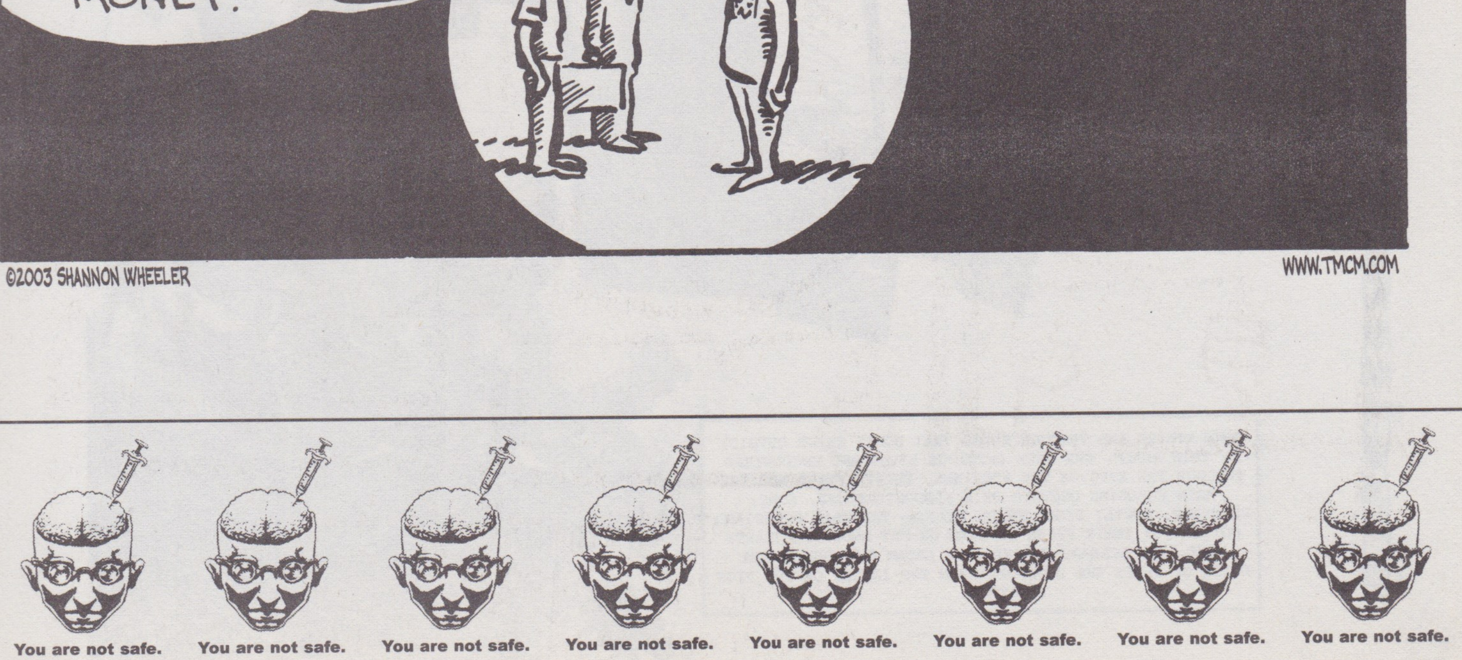
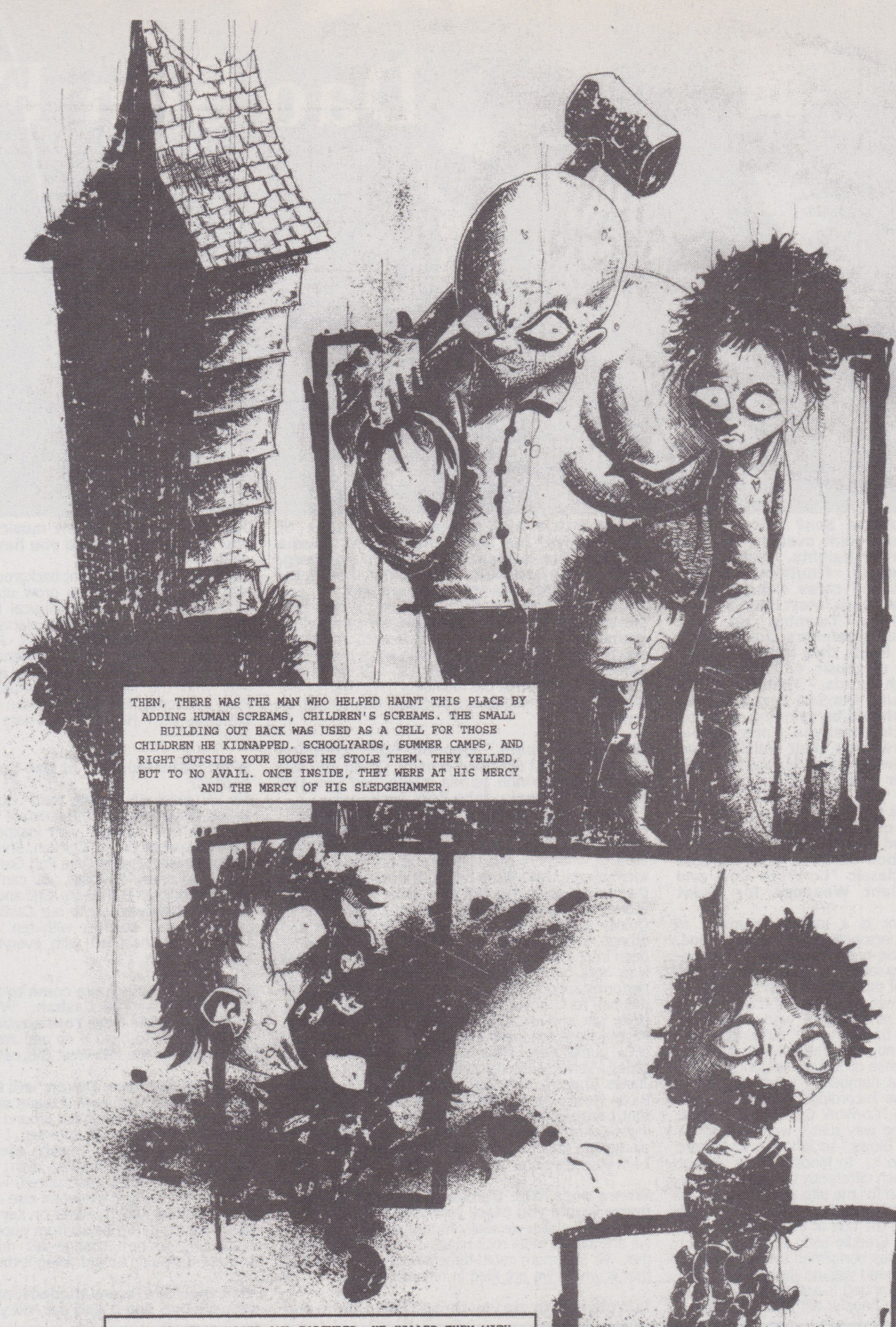
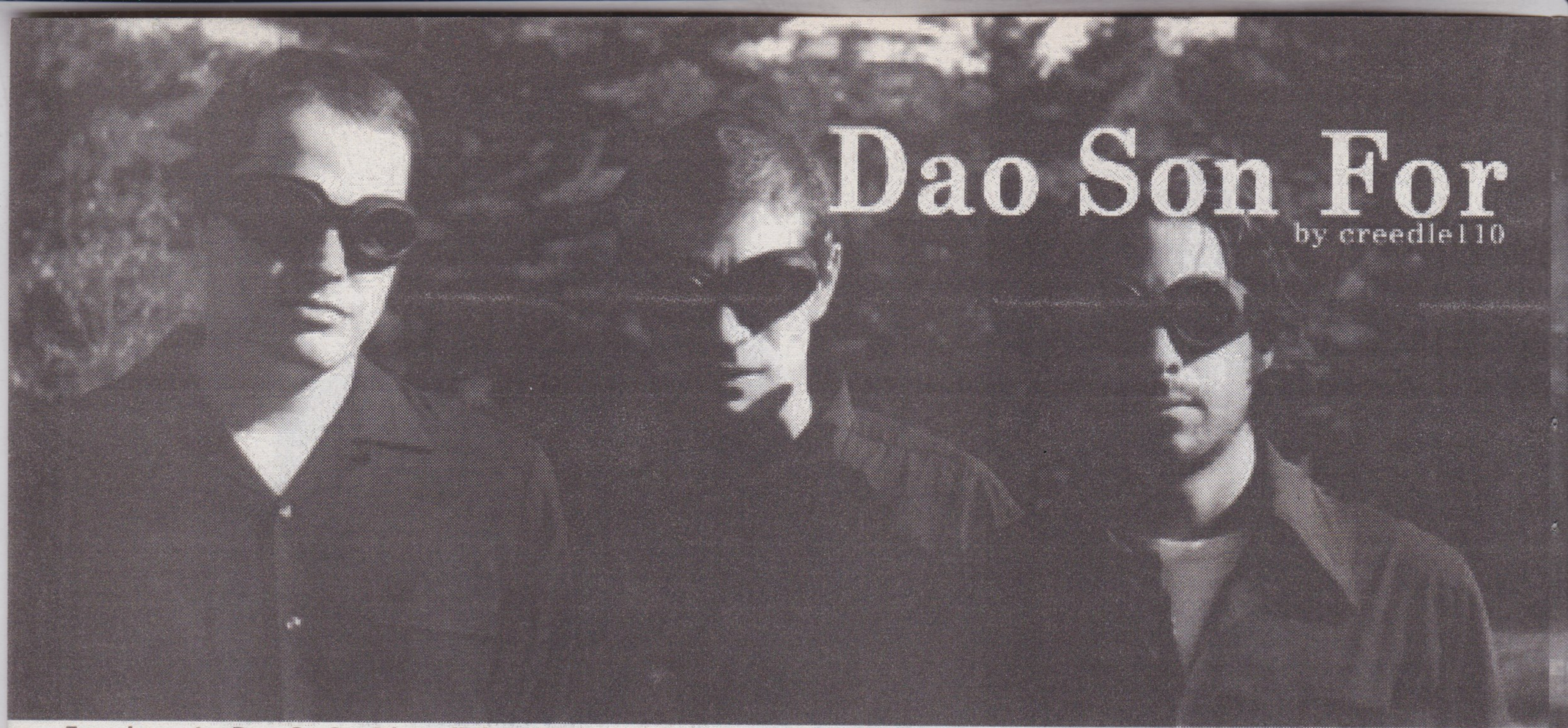


SHE HAS THE ABILITY TO GO MAD OVER THIS FACTORY, OVER THE MACHINES. THE THOUGHT OF HER DAD'S DEATH LEADING TO THE INHERITANCE OF THIS HAUNTED MEMORY, SHE SWIMS IN EVERY OUNCE OF BLOOD AND SWEAT PUT INTO THIS PLACE BY HIM. IT IS A TIRING ROUTINE, THIS BANE SHE DEALS WITH EVERY NIGHT, TRYING TO APPEASE WHOEVER'S IN HER HEAD WHICH OFFERS A FRESH ANNOYANCE EVERY TIME. AND AS SLEEP TAKES OVER HER TENETS, SHE SLEEPWALKS INTO HER DREAMS, FOLLOWING THEM THROUGH THEIR INEXTRICABLE LEAD.
industriacide
DOWN STAIRS AND THROUGH ROOMS THAT DON'T EXIST OUTSIDE OF THIS REALM, SHE SEES PREVIOUS LIVES AND ENCOUNTERS THROUGH THE EYES OF THE MACHINES. EIGHTY YEARS AGO THE MAIN BUILDING USED TO BE A SLAUGHTERHOUSE. COWS, CHICKENS, MOSTLY PIGS, TAKEN THROUGH THE MAIN DOORS AND GUTTED FOR THEIR PRIZE SO THAT WE MAY ENJOY THE TASTY MEAT. THE SCREAMS OF THE PIGS DROWN OUT THE SLIGHT NOISE OF SHOCK SHE PRODUCES WHEN THE IMAGES OF THE PIGS MANIFEST. . .


THEN, THERE WAS THE MAN WHO HELPED HAUNT THIS PLACE BY ADDING HUMAN SCREAMS, CHILDREN'S SCREAMS. THE SMALL BUILDING OUT BACK WAS USED AS A CELL FOR THOSE CHILDREN HE KIDNAPPED. SCHOOLYARDS, SUMMER CAMPS, AND RIGHT OUTSIDE YOUR HOUSE HE STOLE THEM. THEY YELLED, BUT TO NO AVAIL. ONCE INSIDE, THEY WERE AT HIS MERCY AND THE MERCY OF HIS SLEDGEHAMMER.
ONCE PROPERLY RAPED AND TORTURED, HE KILLED THEM WITH HIS SLEDGEHAMMER, LEAVING THEIR BODIES ON POLES IN ANOTHER SECTION OF THE BUILDING FOR DISPLAY. THIS MADMAN'S ARTWORK, HIS MEDIUM OF PERFORMANCE AND EXTRACTION OF THE HUMAN BODY AND SOUL. HIS MESSAGE COLD, BUT TRUTHFUL, OF A DEMON POSSESSED BY THE CONSUMPTION OF A HOBBY, NOW A NEED. IT SUCKS HIM DRY…



Dao Son For

by creedle110

Ever been to Dao Son? It's a little Vietnamese food joint over on El Cajon Blvd in University Heights. Well, apparently ex-Creedle frontman, Devon Goldberg, has and cares enough about the place to name his latest band after it: "DaoSon For". Teaming up with Morricone Youth members, John Castro and Jefferson Rabb, they form an ingenious mixture of music which can't be described with words. Their very first self-titled album, DaoSon For, has been released and should be spinning on a college radio station near you. Interested in them for more then their music, I set about interviewing them for some inside secrets of their trade.

I have to start off the interview with the most blaring question: Is "The DaoSon For" the second incarnation of Creedle? I ask this question because you re-create the Creedle classic "Co-Work Co." and fabricate "Silent Weapons for Quiet Wars".

The DaoSon For is a natural extension of Creedle for me personally. But that is just me. It fulfills that little need to not have any constraints in writing songs and wanting to explore different types of music other than one specific niche. Nonetheless, there are, of course, three other different personalities who have their own individual backgrounds, influences and agendas with no association with Creedle besides, in the case of Steve and John, having seen the band a number of times and being familiar with the recordings. Actually, I just wanted to re-do "Co-Work Co." because it did not come out the way that I wanted it to on "When the Wind Blows," so John was saying we should just re-do it. In hindsight, we did not really do that much differently to it besides substituting an organ for the alto sax, but hey... In the case of "Silent Weapons for Quiet Wars" (in addition to being the title of the 2nd album), it was also an old Creedle song that was never recorded but it was performed live a couple of times when the band was on its last legs. We tweaked it, re-arranged it and turned it into a palindrome. I am happier with (our) version.

Every article and review I have seen of "DaoSon For" has linked the band to Creedle through the presence of Devon Goldberg. Enjoy being compared to an older, now non-existent band? Was this on purpose?

It wasn't on purpose. It just seems to have happened that way, I assume, because of the similarities in sound and the fact that I sing in both and that I was the main songwriter in Creedle and a major contributing one in The DaoSon For. Of all of the numerous bands that the members have been or are presently in, Creedle is obviously the closest in sound.

Your new album, "DaoSon For", contains many different styles of music. Could you tell the readers which bands influenced you the most? Mr. Bungle, John Zorn perhaps?

I wouldn't really say either of those are major influences even though we all have respect for both of them and are familiar with them. We all have a huge array of influences and I would suspect that many of them overlap with those bands. For instance, I know that we are all fans of film soundtrack music such as scores composed by Ennio Morricone, Lalo Schifrin, Quincy Jones, Jerry Goldsmith, Peter Thomas and others. Every member of The DaoSon For has either been in or is presently in Morricone Youth which is a New York band formed in 1999 that re-works and performs soundtrack compositions in more of a traditional rock band format (drums, bass, guitars, keys, sax and vocals). But speaking for myself, I have a huge fondness for early N.Y., U.K., L.A. and D.C. punk, Can, Magma, Bowie, Kraftwerk, the Pixies, Velvet Underground, early Flaming Lips, James Chance, Tom Ze, Talking Heads, Eno, early Roxy Music, Arto Lindsay, Blue Note recordings, slint/bastro, Bitches Brew-era Miles, the MPS recordings, Coltrane, AACM recordings. We are basically passionate about a lot of different kinds of music, as I am sure they are.

Where does "The DaoSon For" fit in? Which genre would you place yourselves into?

We don't feel like we really fit in anywhere but truly we are just an indie rock band. I would like to think that we are more multi-dimensional than that but that is where we are filed in record stores.

It is obvious to me you three, Devon, John and Jefferson, are excellent musicians. Are you all prodigies or did you have to work at it?

We all come from different backgrounds. I was also fortunate enough to grow up with John who comes from a very musical family. His dad, Joe Castro, was a jazz pianist signed to Atlantic in the late 50's/early 60's - look him up. He was a close personal friend of Duke Ellington's and he played with and is on recordings with the likes of Cannonball Adderley, Philly Joe Jones, Billy Higgins, Stan Getz, Teddy Edwards, etc. His mom is a jazz vocalist as well.

What is the food like at Dao Son 2? Is it decent?

Are you kidding? It's the best! Don't you live in San Diego?(no)It is the greatest Vietnamese food I've ever had and very inexpensive. Try the Vietnamese Crepe, Chicken, Shrimp or Tofu Lemon Grass, Chicken Rice Pot, Garlic Chicken, etc. It all rules. Basically, you can't go wrong with anything on the menu. Eric and Tong from Dao Son 2 showed up to our Casbah show in San Diego last summer with ten + Chinese take-out cartons filled with everything. We were in heaven.

I know you guys have come to San Diego and played at The Casbah. Will you be touring outside New York anytime soon?

We are trying to build it up and are hoping to do 2 weeks in the Mid-West this early spring.

One final question: Devon, will there ever be a Creedle reunion? Please say yes.

I tried to organize a reunion around the time of the San Diego show last summer. I had visions of, if it was successful, maybe even trying to book a tour. Pieboy, aka Tim, didn't want to do it though so it never materialized, which was a bummer since I had everyone else agreeing to do it including Robert Walter on keys and samples. Maybe if Tim hears from enough people requesting it, he'll change his mind. Who knows? I wouldn't mind doing it though.

Visit their site, www.thedaosonfor.com & stop by Dao Son 2 and eat 'till you puke.

The Dao Son Noodle House is located in the good part of the shitty part of San Diego, in University Heights.

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By James Wright

For most music is a passion but for Century Media recording artist Shadows Fall it's much more than that. It's a way of life. Touring for approximately three quarters of each year, the band exists because they love making music. Living in cramped vans without the comforts of home life, Shadows Fall is driven by a need to express themselves musically. That musical expression is what possessed the band to create their sophomore effort, "The Art of Balance". The album is an intricate mix of old school trash metal riffs, hardcore growls and melodic overtones.

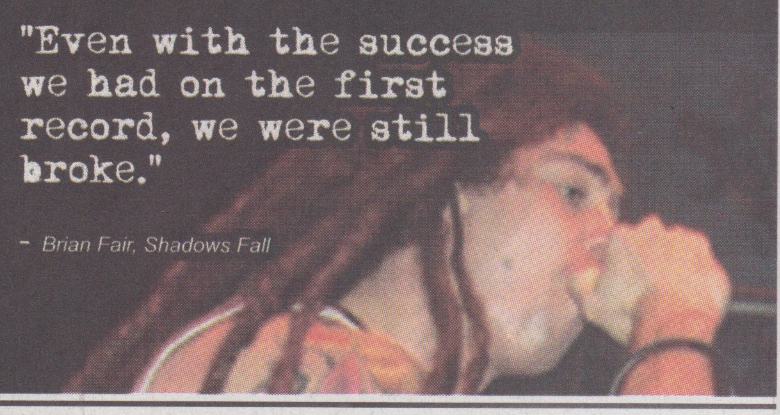
Shadows Fall has sacrificed everything for their music. Some of the band members recently have to sacrifice their full time employment in order to continue the bands grueling road schedule. Fortunately for vocalist Brain Fair he is self-employed running his own publicity firm, Bullpen Promotions (www.bullpenpromotions.com). His commitment to the underground and metal as a musical form is unfettered even when it comes to earning a regular paycheck. "That's basically the problem with being in any touring band is you have to give up the health insurance and the steady job just to roll the dice. Right before we recorded this record we were all working full-time jobs. Even with the success we had on the first record, we were still broke." Explains Fair with a sigh. "Right now if we don't stay on the road then we're not able to make rent. We basically send money home to rent out empty rooms! It's a vicious cycle but it's worth it. We've all been in bands for over ten years so for all of us it's all we know and if that means we have to move back in with Mom and Dad then so be it."

Shadows Fall have continued to tour almost endlessly ever the release of their Century Media debut, "Of One Blood". The band prefers the 'do it yourself' philosophy when it comes to touring and that alone has allowed them to remain on the road for so long. Their dedication to their craft and commitment to music in general has earned them the respect of their peers as the band has been offered to open tours for the likes of Hatebreed, Glassjaw and most recently Kittie. "Radio and mainstream press aren't going to give us any real big breaks so the way we've always handled it was to go out and tour as much as possible with as many different types of bands as we can. We've toured with everyone from Kittie and Glassjaw all the way to King Diamond and Hatebreed." And tour they did. Shadows Fall have been road warriors going out on the road with anyone who will have them. So far their endless assault on the road has paid off as "The Art of Balance" sold 4,500 copies in its first week of release making it the highest selling Century Media release ever for first week sales. The impressive numbers also landed the band a coveted spot on Billboard Magazine's Heatseekers Chart. An obviously excited Fair states, "We sold 4,500 the first week and then we scanned another 3,000 this week. We even popped up on the Billboard Heatseekers Chart, which for us is ridiculous. To get any kind of attention from Billboard is amazing."

When confronted on the idea of mainstream success Brain is realistic and yet still determined, "The label is really trying to push this record as their breakthrough record for this year and we're stoked about it. The only drawback to being on a label like Century Media is that if we ever got offered one of these big tours like Ozzfest they just don't have the funds to buy you onto the tour. They don't have the funds a major label does but you know that going into it and you try and work together waith the label to do it within those confines." Shadows Fall remains defiant in their attempt at changing the mainstream trendiness of hard rock and metal.

The album stands persistent in the face of mainstream heavy music with its throated growls and vicious guitars that pierce. The band is here to usher in a new state of address for heavy music. "The Art of Balance" is an uncompromising metal masterpiece that touches on all aspects of hard music from hardcore to thrash and death metal. Brain laughs at the general consensus of what is considered metal today," I remember telling people I was in a metal band and people would be like, "Oh', you guys have a DJ?" Laughs Fair. Devoid of any rapping and turn tables, Shadows Fall are nothing more than extreme metal at it's finest, reminiscent of Metallica during the early eighties in their approach and delivery. When asked about Shadows Fall being compared to the likes of metal's finest, Fair does not try to downplay the connection. "Well those are bands that all five of us grew up listening to. That whole Bay area thrash scene with Testament and Metallica and bands like early Anthrax and Iron Maiden are what we grew up listening to. These days we listen to a wide variety but those are definitely the roots of where we come from. When we started this record I think we wanted to go back to that kind of sound because I think it's something that's been forgotten by metal bands today and it's something that will have a familiar sound to it without being retro but definitely make us stand out."

Despite the fact that Shadows Fall are viciously heavy, the album stands a truly personal piece of art. The track 'Destroyer of Senses' chronicles not only the bands battle with alcoholism but his Fair's own Father. "That song is really about is the whole 'Destroyer of senses/ Giver of life' and it may make you the life of the party but it is eating your liver. It's just something that everyone in this band knows about very well so I figured it was time to document it. Everyone loves to drink but you have to know when to draw that line because it can really ruin your life. It's a balancing act of just being able to party as much as you want to but not having it control you." Explains Fair. Although the album deals with very personal matter lyrically, Fair states that he couldn't have written music any other way. "I grew up in the hardcore scene where bands always talked on a real personal level describing experiences or ideas. I couldn't really write any other way because I'm not really into making my lyrics into characters or anything like that. I don't really feel a personal connection with that type of writing and if I'm going to be up there screaming the lyrics every night I need to feel it. I think I have something positive and worthwhile to say and if people are going to offer me a platform to express myself then I'm going to cease the opportunity."



You can't wash dreads. Dreads are dirty and smell bad.
But they make you look bad ass.

Well, not all the time.

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Hell or High Water
SUGAR DADDIE
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caroline DISTRIBUTION

Balance is something that the band is no stranger to, balancing the aggressive metal aspect of their music with the melodies and atmospheric sounds. "I came up with the title for this record before we even recorded because we wanted to have that balance of melody and aggression but at the same time, lyrically we wanted things to be a bit more positive. I think the variety of musical influences from thrash to old school rock and roll we used on this record really just helped define what we were about and what we wanted to accomplish. 'The Art of Balance' is really just describing the process of trying to find that balance between the two really."

"We wanted to have that balance of melody and aggression but at the same time, lyrically we wanted things to be a bit more positive. 'The Art of Balance' is really just describing the process of trying to find that balance between the two."

-Brain Fair, Shadows Fall

Shadows Fall Discography:

The Art of Balance (2002) - Century Media

Of One Blood (2000) - Century Media

Somber Eyes To The Sky (1998) - Lifeless Records

Whether mainstream success comes for Shadows Fall or not they have already succeeded. They have created a record that is truly a work of art devoid of any trends and for that they should be commended.

Shadows Fall On Tour:

3/11/03 Winston-Salem, NC @ Ziggy's

3/12/03 Atlanta, GA @ The Masquerade

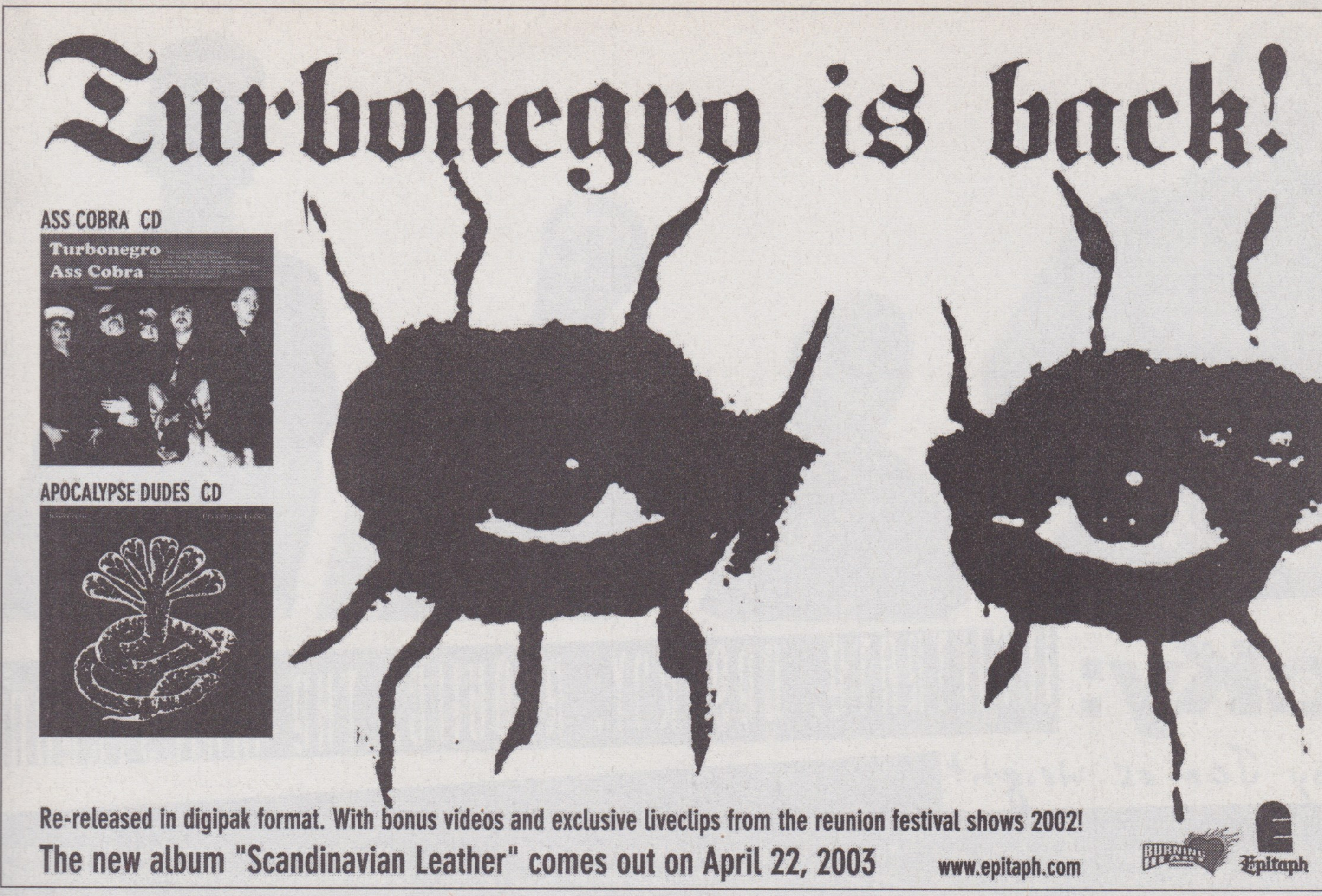
3/15/03 Austin, TX @ Emo's Alternative Lounging

3/20/03 West Hollywood, CA @ Whisky A-Go-Go

3/23/03 Seattle, WA @ Graceland

3/31/03 Cleveland, OH @ Agora Ballroom

more dates @ shadowsfall.com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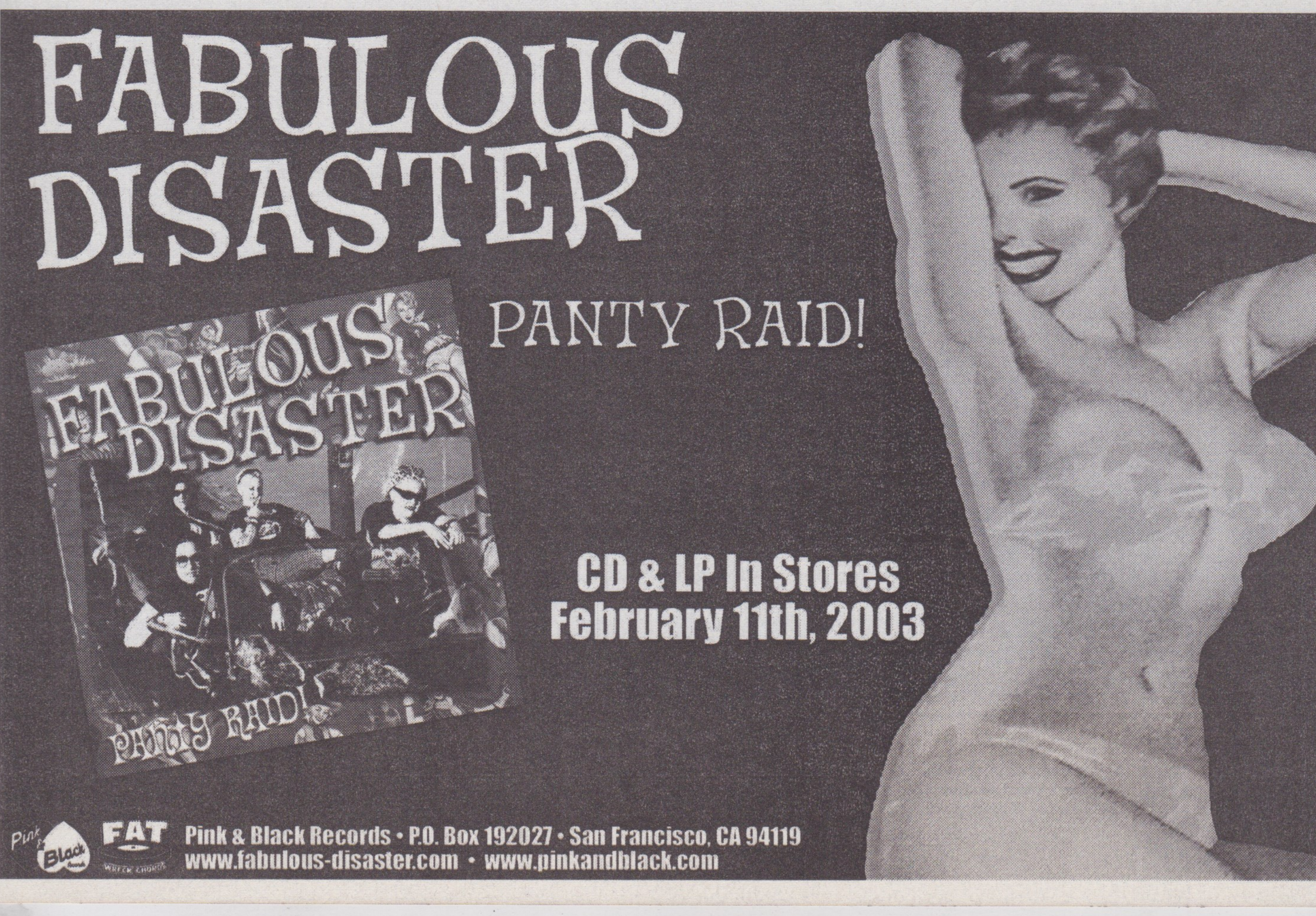
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cKy: INFILTRATE. DESTROY. REBUILD. THE MAINSTREAM

by James Wright

Bands in the hard rock genre live or die by word of mouth and touring. Touring is essential. This type of music is no longer painted all over MTV. Word of mouth is also a key ingredient to a bands success and CKY know that all too well. "Word of mouth is almost as powerful as being shoved down people's throats on MTV or radio," states CKY drummer Jess Margera. CKY has built a loyal underground following through word of mouth, touring and the Internet. In fact, CKY is cited as the most downloaded band on the Internet, which is probably due to them being plastered all over MTV's Jackass. It wasn't until recently that the band started gaining more mainstream popularity and high profile tours with bands like Guns and Roses and Godsmack. The bands latest single, 'Flesh Into Gear', has begun gaining airplay across the country and given the band the momentum they need to "Infiltrate, Destroy, Rebuild" the mainstream. Modern Fix recently had the chance to sit down with CKY drummer Jess Margera about this enigmatic band.

I gotta be honest; when I first heard the name CKY I thought you were a hardcore band or something like that.
Jess: Kinda like the initials A.F.I or something like that? (Laughs) We never really thought too much about the name all that much. Our name is Camp Kill Yourself and we went with that for a while but then everyone just shortened it and it stuck.

This is actually the 3rd CKY record right?
We did the first one, "Volume 1" a while ago and then we put out kind of like a soundtrack with, "Volume 2" so this is kind of our third album. The first record was definitely an underground thing and for a while the only place to find it was the Internet. We sold about 40,000 copies through the mail and then once labels got wind of that they wanted in on it.

I was reading that you guys are the most bootlegged band on the Internet.
I believe it! We had a video on MTV before we even had a record deal so I think people saw that and wanted to check us out, but our record wasn't in stores. Because of that I think people just turned to the Internet to find it. "Volume 1" is kind of hard to find but you should be able to find it now. What's funny about "Volume 1" is, this past week, was actually our best week of sales for that album. (Laughs) It's been out since 1999 but it's selling now better than it ever was back then.

You think that's due to word of mouth?
Word of mouth is pretty powerful. Word of mouth is almost as powerful as being shoved down people's throats on MTV or radio.

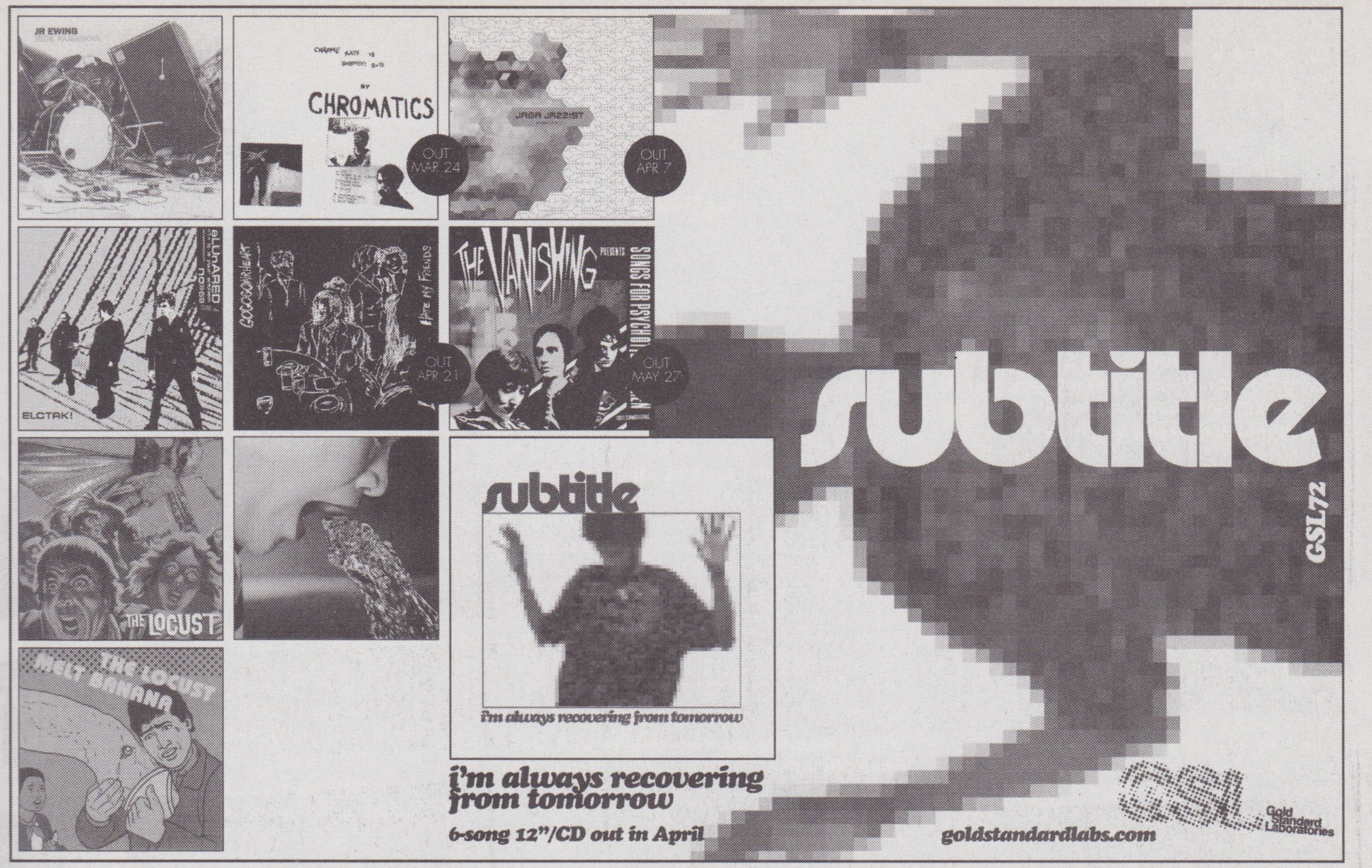
Has that helped to allow you some more leeway with the label? It's not like CKY spent 3 years on the road for each record or anything like that.
It's funny because even when we're not on tour, the album still keeps going. I'm amazed when I look at how much buzz it's created.

CKY has a close relationship with their fans. So close, that you had a meeting with your fans to address concerns about the new record?
It's not just that, because every show we play, we always hang out with kids after the show. We hang out for a couple hours and just talk to people. I always love to hear what they have to say and our fans are cool and deserve a lot of respect from us. They were the ones who sought us out even when we weren't on MTV or radio. We're starting to get a bit of airplay now but some of our fans have been with us right from the start. 'Flesh Into Gear' is starting to get quite a bit of airplay and that's amazing.

In past interviews the band has stated that it intends to change the world and show kids there's more than just what's in the mainstream. Does the idea of mainstream success appeal to you?
I don't know. I just think that mainstream rock music has wussed out a bit. It seems like one band comes out and has some success then it seems like there is a million other bands are right there ready to copy it. I think that's pretty lame. The whole movement to bring back the retro thing, like The Strokes, it's just like lets move forward not backward. Bands like the Rolling Stones did that shit better 30 years ago

so why would I want to buy it now when I could

23 years ago, Camp Crystal Lake was shut down after the mysterious death of a young boy and a couple of counselors.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CKY Interview Continued...

buy the real thing.

The problem I have with The Strokes is that they're boring. Watching some guy star at his shoes and look uninterested is not something I wanna pay $30 to see.

I would much rather buy a Stones record and see Mick Jagger or even Iggy Pop raging like that instead of The Strokes. Those bands originated that whole thing and usually the originators are the best.

But once someone does something new and it becomes successful, record labels want to jump on the bandwagon to cash in.

That's the problem. Record labels are out there to make the quick buck. They just want to get their copycats out there and make as much money as they can before the band is gone. It seems like everyone is a one hit wonder nowadays. Where are the hit makers from last year? They're already gone! That's just a complaint that I have and we're definitely trying to change that with CKY. It might not happen this year or tomorrow but at least we're out there trying. Rock used to be way better in the 70's and bands were original. Those bands didn't care about whatever trends were going on or any of that stuff.

Do you think the lack of originality in music today is attributed to labels signing these copycat bands?

That's a big part of it. There are definitely bands out there though that are doing their own thing. Look at Queens of the Stone Age. They're awesome and I love those guys. I think they're on the same page as us in that they just make rock the way that they want and they aren't concerned with whatever trends are going on right now. They just do whatever they want and now they're huge! Some of that may be due to the fact that Dave Grohl was playing drums, but whatever it takes. They're a great band and I've been listening to them since 98' when their first record came out. It's really cool to see them getting more recognition cause they deserve it.

You've turned down quite a few tour offers from other bands. Why? Isn't the whole point of touring to turn other kids onto your music?

There are some tours we get offered and it's nothing against the bands but we're just not fans of a lot of bands out there. I don't want to pick on anybody and I'm sure they could care less because they've already made their money. I don't want that. I want people's respect and I want people to hear our record and have people think we've done our own thing and have them like it because it's good instead of the face on MTV.

So it's about longevity and a career instead of making one hit record?

Definitely. I want to be around for a while and have a solid career instead of get in and make my money and leave. It seems like every band nowadays is like that and they just don't care.

You're embarking on a headlining tour by yourselves in February?

Yes we are. We're just going to have bands we like open for us on this tour. I'm not sure what bands we'll have out just yet, but I've suggested a few. There's this dude White Buffalo in California right now and he's awesome. He's signed to Hurley, the same company that makes clothes, and they just started a label. I'm so into his record right now. They need some exposure and I'm hoping we can give it to them.

What's it like to go from arenas with Guns and Roses to a headlining club tour of your own?

It's cool to go out there and play arenas but the people are so far away. It's just not as cool as a 1,500 or 1,000 seat club where people are pretty much falling on ya'. I want people falling into my drums! (Laughs)

What's next after the headlining tour?

We have a DVD we want to finish up. We did a video for every single song on the new record. We have 7 of them done already and 4 more to go. It's a lot of work and a lot of money, but I feel that every song on this record deserves a video. Honestly, if you asked me to pick my favorite song off this record I couldn't because I like em' all.

What was the G'N'R tour like for you guys?

It was awesome. It was one of the best tours of the year and I'm just glad Axl asked us to be a part of it.

What was it like performing in your hometown of Philly when a riot broke out?

We got word that it wasn't gonna happen and we just got the hell out of there. Our bus was parked in the parking lot with all the other cars, so god knows what would have happened if we hadn't. They probably would have tried to flip it over or something! (Laughs) I don't really know all that much about why it happened but I'm just glad we got to be part of it for the month or so that it lasted and that was good enough for me.

A lot of kids know CKY from the CKY videos and from Jackass. How instrumental were those in exposing the band to new audiences?

Of course, a lot of people found out about us as a band from one of the episodes of the show cause they played one of our songs. Supposedly the most asked question on the Jackass message board was, "What was that song that was being played?" It's cool that it had such an effect because we've had our music on a ton of other shows but just for some reason it connected on that one. It's also helped get our music out to kids that wouldn't have heard of us otherwise. We get fan mail from all over Europe and the U.K and kids say, "What are you doing? Get here to play shows," and we've never been anywhere overseas yet. We were in Iceland filming the CKY2K video and we're in this small little town and kids were like, "Oh my god, its CKY!" This is back before we had an album in stores so I guess it comes back to what you were saying earlier about the Internet. Downloading is a powerful thing.

So downloading music isn't an issue for CKY?

Not really. With the way Mp3's work and downloading, it's cool, but I don't think you should be able to get the entire album. A major label record costs anywhere from $200,000 to $500,000 to make so why should it be free? I don't have a problem with 2 or 3 three songs being on the net for kids to check out but to get the entire record is just really unfair.

Well CKY isn't exactly a gold or platinum selling artist yet so each sale helps.

I'm not worried about the money aspect of it because I have enough money. I think it's just unfair to be able to get something for free when it cost us so much to make it. Unfortunately the artists have to pay for everything, the promotion and the tour support, all which gets billed directly to the artist.

Do you think your antics in the videos takes away from the music?

No because I think most people realize that there is a hell of a lot more going on. People tell us all the time, "I heard about you through this and wasn't really expecting too much but I got the record and it just kicked my ass!" I think it's cool that we're kind of raising everyone's expectations a bit. A lot of people have told us that they heard a song and after that they bought the record cause the song was stuck in their head. Every time I ask someone what his or her favorite song on the record is I get a different answer, which is really cool.

'Plastic Plan' is definitely on the top of my list.

Yea' I'm all about that one too! It's got that driving disco vibe kinda thing! (Laughs) The melody is pretty infectious and Deron did a great job of writing that.

10 years from now how would you like people to remember CKY?

I don't want them to remember us but be into our music. We'll still be making records but if for some reason we're not then I think our albums are pretty timeless. I think these albums can be in people's CD players for years to come.

Opeth

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DOCTOR WHO

Episode XIV

the faction paradox

Saturday, February 15th - 2003

Dr. Who Convention at the Airtel Hotel, Los Angeles

Sci-Fi Geek: Bushman

Based on my own personal experience, the greater percentage of you reading this have either never heard of Dr.Who, or have some fuzzy PBS recollection of some misspent youth in front of the TV.

But you don't KNOW Who.

As briefly as possible...

Starting in 1963 and running well past 1993 (with more Dr. Who possibilities on the horizon) Dr.Who is a British Sci-Fi television show that holds the record for being the longest single Science Fiction series ever (we're not counting spin offs). They accomplished this by utilizing a story line around a Time Lord who 'regenerates' into a new body (new actor) every so often. It was an incredibly daring move for television to remove the main actor, but the strength of the stories kept the fans tuning into the show regularly. Originally run in small serial formats, the US started importing the whole episodes and generally running them on PBS stations across the country and gained it's popularity throughout the 80's.

As for Dr.Who himself...

Dr.Who is a renegade Time Lord. He travels around time and space thwarting evil from his TARDIS (Time and Relative Dimensions in Space). Basically, his time machine that looks like a British Police Call Box. He has various companions (generally bumbling idiots who generally serve as plot devices to 'be rescued') and once had a great sidekick robotic dog named 'K9'. Daleks, Cybermen, The Master... All these villains bring smiles of evil joy to any fan. Sounds geeky huh?

Well, it is.

But let's look at the facts:

Top 10 Reasons why Dr. Who is cooler than Star Trek:

10. If you tell someone you are going to a Star Trek convention, you are a geek. If you tell someone you are going to a Dr.Who convention, you are an underground Sci-Fi buff.

9. Dr. Who perfected the cheesy low-budget Sci-Fi effect. The most feared villain resembles a saltshaker.

8. Dr.Who's original series run was about 5 times longer than Star Trek's original run.

7. British People sound smarter and are just more fun to listen to. (Although, Star Trek even figured that out with one of their Captains, but we now know where they got that boss idea from.)

6. In Star Trek, they travel around in a multi-billion dollar space cruiser. Doctor Who travels around in a time machine that looks like a telephone booth.

5. The Kirk vs. Picard argument pales when you have to argue the merits of EIGHT different Doctors (plus the movie Doctor).

4. Star Trek uses 'Phasers on stun!" Dr. Who uses a 'sonic screwdriver'.

3. Star Trek never had a mechanical dog that shot lasers out of its nose.

2. Captain Kirk was commander of a space ship. Dr. Who commanded TIME. He was a FUCKING TIME LORD. You can't mess with that.

1. Star Trek SUX!

THE CONVENTION:

I have been to ComicCon numerous times, but I didn't know what to expect out of a convention so specialized. Arriving at the Airtel Plaza hotel in Los Angeles, we weren't overrun by hundreds of Dr.Who fans dressed like Daleks. In fact, the whole ordeal was rather intimate and low key. Numbering in maybe a couple hundred (tops) wandering the halls (755 total for the weekend), the Dr.Who fans shuffled about a few rooms and corridors, soaking up as much of the convention as possible. Unlike Comic Con, the average person would find little of interest here. This is all for those fascinated by the Sci-Fi world, and Dr.Who in particular.

This Episode of the convention (every year is an 'episode', this being the conventions 14th) featured something rare:

TWO Doctor Who actors would actually be in attendance. Peter Davison and Colin Baker (Dr.Who #5 and #6 respectively) both made appearances.

We sat in on one panel where Baker and Davison discussed their memories of John Nathan Turner (one of the favored Dr. Who producers who had recently passed). They spoke glowingly of Turners love of his craft and his individual and hands on style in which he approached producing. Since Turner had basically hand selected both actors to play the Doctor, they both felt honored and humbled to speak on his behalf. Many humorous stories of location shoots and troubled episodes were told. Listening to British people

talk is usually entertaining anyway. Listening to two actual Dr. Who actors discuss memories of the business, as Dr. Who, was enrapturing. Truly, this was great to sit and listen to two actors who had filled up so much of my youth (and now on tape/dvd) television.

We also sat in on a Babylon 5 discussion. The Dr. Who convention usually runs with a partner Sci-Fi release or series. This year was Babylon 5. Jeff Conway was one of the panelists and kept the crowd continually cracking up with his observation of the industry filtered through east coast accented wise cracks. You may remember Jeff most memorably as John Travolta's main sidekick in Grease, "Kenickie". Julie Caitlin Brown (Na'Toth) was also present with a few others I didn't recognize (hey, I watch Dr.Who, not Babylon 5). But between Adams and Conway, they really gave some insight into SAG (the Screen Actors Guild) and how it's about the cruddiest union out there. Some horror stories of being stuck in prosthetic makeup for hours on end and the health risks involved was one of the major topics. Again, numerous mishaps and industry insider stories entertained the couple of dozen present. Jeff Conway is a funny dude.

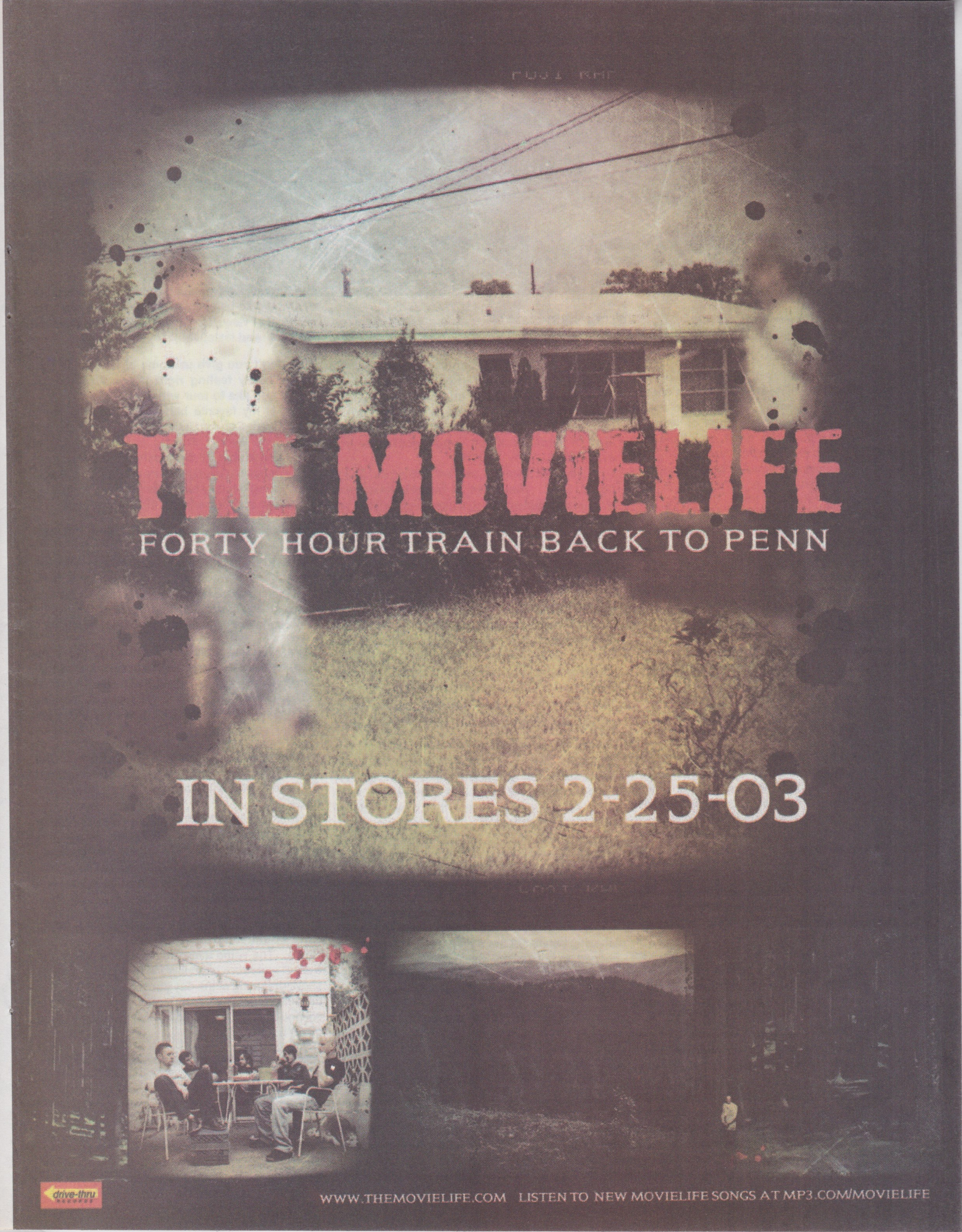
There were tables that lined the two sections of hallways that held some surprise Sci-Fi guests.

JEFF CONWAY — BABYLON 5, GREASE | HERBERT JEFFERSON JR — BATTLESTAR GALLACTICA | VIRGINIA HEY — THE ROAD WARRIOR, FARSCAPE | JAMES C. LEARY — BUFFY THE VAMPIRE SLAYER

Lt. Boomer was a pleasant and unexpected surprise. C'mon, Battlestar Gallactica... Cylons... that shit was cool and you know it. I overheard some talk that they are trying to get a Battlestar Gallactica Movie going. Well, DUH! If I had the money, I would drop it into that project. With the built-in fan base of 30-sumpthin's that grew up with the show and now all have their kids... add in some new-school CGI animations, and a fuzzy computer generated rodent for the kids, and that's an easy win.

I was not going away from my first Dr.Who convention empty handed either. We found the dealer room, but I was under whelmed to say the least. I found 3 Dr.Who T-shirt designs. Three. But I did score a talking Dalek. (SCORE!). A cool t-shirt and a "TARDIS" key.

And the experience of sitting in the same room as TWO Dr.Whos. For those that know, that is beyond cool. That is... timeless.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Serene
SERENITY NOW

By Brian Greenaway

In a letter to his brother Andre, French philosopher Simone Weil wrote, "The struggle against anguish never produces serenity; the struggle against anguish only produces new forms of anguish." Serene, hailing from the great emo-indie-rock-wasteland that is the state of Washington, have ceased to struggle against anguish and have produced something that is, for lack of a better word...serene. Full of lilting melodies, jilted keyboards, and ample guitars, the quartets' 2002 self-titled release on Area Rock Recording Co. captures the smell of rain on warm cement and the gentle rumblings of the human spirit without sounding portentous. No easy feat. Lead singer and guitarist Ryan shared his mind with Modern Fix about pressing musical business. And about paying too much for drinks at clubs.

Where are you living right now?
I'm living out near Seattle. Erik and Matt both live in Seattle and
Jesse is living in Kirkland. That's where Erik, Jesse, and I grew up. Matt moved out here with his new wife from Maryland.

What's the average Serene fan like?
The average Serene fan? Hmm...that's a hard one...for the most part they're cool cats in their early twenties. I think that is because we have been mostly playing bars thus far, which hurts our chances of getting younger fans. Hopefully we'll be able to play more all ages shows in the coming months.

Nothing wrong with early twenties though—how much younger are you looking for? Or is this some sort of Pete Townshend thing?
The problem with fans being in their early twenties is that those kids are usually broke. They're either working a shit job and just getting by or they are in college—either way they don't have much extra money.
Junior High and High Schoolers are the ones with their parents' money to burn, but I don't think kids that young are going to be quite as open to our music.

I think you're right about younger people struggling to really get into a group with such an idiosyncratic style as Serene. Do you bother classifying a band with a sound as diverse as yours or do you just go with some kind of "indie-rock" or "emo" label? Do you even care?
I usually just say we are an indie-rock, guitar based band. You have to classify your music because people are always interested in what you sound like, and they generally want a two-word answer.

What with Built to Spill, Modest Mouse, etc. do you feel the Pacific Northwest has a distinctive sound?
I think Seattle definitely has a distinctive sound that has been attached to it involving the whole post-grunge movement out here. But there are tons of bands from Seattle who don't really fit into the stereotype. Most of the bigger indie bands that have come out of Seattle do fall into that distinctive Seattle sound category, though.

Why?
I guess the reason there is a distinctive sound is because there is an amazing scene out here. There are so many amazing bands, and it's a very close-knit group of musicians, from what I have seen. So it makes sense that they would all influence each other to a point, giving them all that familiar sound that is still somehow completely original.

Anything really bother you about the state of music right now?
I think it is a great time for music (not including the mainstream) the indie scene has so many amazing bands out there right now. The market is flooded so I guess my only complaint is that there are so many good bands out there that it is nearly impossible to get any exposure right now.

Can you ever have too many keyboards?
You can never have too many keyboards...but you can have too many cheesy keyboard parts. I started to get into music just as the eighties were ending, so I have had a hatred of keyboards in general while growing up. But now that a number of my favorite bands use keyboards, I've changed my point of view. Now I love keyboards, provided they are used tastefully.

Why don't you give us some of the bands that you're really feeling right now. What bands would you like to tour with?
A few of my favorite bands are The Appleseed Cast, Death Cab for Cutie, Superdrag, Elliott, and The Gloria Record. I'd love to tour with any of those bands, but for the most part, our tours are pretty much just us. If we were offered an opening slot then we'd totally take it, but for now we just go out on our own because it's more economical.

The most annoying thing about life on the road is...
Having to sit around at venues for hours before the show. They always have a ridiculous lull in time. That puts us there hours before our set so we end up spending too much money on drinks, which gets expensive when it happens every night.

Word. You should have some sort of free drink clause inked into your contract or something.
Some venues are cool about it and give you some drinks, but the Cat Club in LA sucks cause they don't give you a single drink and they aren't too welcoming.

You guys seem to spend a lot of time on the road. How long until you're back in Southern California, and what can we expect from a live show?
Hopefully we'll be back down your way in April or May. We're doing a month long tour in February, but it's mainly The East Coast and The Midwest. I'm not really too sure what to tell you to expect from our live show...just four guys rocking out and having a good time.

If you weren't in a big, successful rock band, what would you be doing?
Ha-ha. The same thing I'm doing now, playing in a small indie-rock band looking forward to our next show, dreaming of the day that music can help pay the bills. But if I wasn't in Serene I'd probably have continued on to law school, which I've been putting off for a few years.

"Serenity Now!" is a preferred therapeutic coping method employed by Frank Costanza.

YOU DON'T KNOW THAT!

"I wouldn't ever want to write a song for 9/11"

I would say it's a mix of the two, although I try not to let things that are world issues come into play in my lyrics. I like to try and think of timeless ideas, so I wouldn't ever want to write a song for 9/11.

Do you have anything you consider to be your most profound musical accomplishment thus far?
I guess one of our most profound accomplishments was playing SXSW [The South by Southwest Entertainment Industry Summit. Past guests have included Beck, Kevin Smith, Johnny Cash, Wyclef, Tom Waits and Dennis Hopper] two years ago with Creeper Lagoon and Superdrag, two amazing bands, and both of the bands knowing who we were. We had only played a handful of local shows before that, so suddenly being in Austin, Texas playing with two bands I knew about well before that show...it was a crazy big jump for us and really changed where we were in the musical word.

What can we expect from your next album?
The next album is going to be more of a studio album, where we'll figure out the best way to play the songs live after we record the album. Our first album was, for the most part, an exact representation of what we do live; so now I want to try the other side, the studio side, with more instrumentation, strings, organ, piano, and more guitars.

Anyone you'd like to thank before saying goodbye?
I'd like to thank our wives, girlfriends, children, and parents for all of the support they have given us these past couple years, as well as the guys at Arena Rock for being the coolest guys we know, all of our friends who come out and see us play, and you guys at Modern Fix for taking the time to do this interview.

Outro: I'd like to apologize for that French philosopher's quote back there at the beginning. Trying to describe the way a band like Serene sounds is like trying to nail Jello to a wall. Check out www.sereneuk.com for more info on future tours, band info, and just about anything else you'd ever want to know.

http://www.arenarockrecordingco.com/serene/photos.asp

DECEMBER

The End of All Things to Come

by James Wright

Extreme music, for most part, has been stagnant. The same material is being regurgitated with little room for innovation and originality except for a few saving graces. It has taken a few young upstart artists to help change the face of extreme music (Death Metal, Grind, Thrash whatever you like to call it) for the better by giving it a much-needed shot in the arm. Reno, Nevada's December is at the head of that movement. Part of their appeal to audiences is their refusal to be governed by the conventional "rules" of extreme music. "We don't want people to look at the band name or even our album cover and say, 'Oh' it's just another death metal band.' We don't want people to be able to prejudge us or pigeonhole us in any way." Explains vocalist Mark Moots. Combining elements of death metal, hardcore and the odd timing changes of a band like Dillinger Escape Plan, December pushes the boundaries of extreme music. After listening to their Earache Records debut, "The Lament Configuration", we quickly caught up with December throat Mark Moots to talk about their interesting approach to extreme music.

James: Where did the name December originate from? It's not a very extreme sounding name and that's what I like about it.

Mark: Well there are two answers to that question. The first one being the truth and that is I got the name December from the first Only Living Witness record. They were and probably still are one of my favorite bands. The song 'December' on that record kind of touched me and I thought that what the song was about and sounded like was what I embodied this to be about even if it wouldn't sound like that. We kind of took the name from that but I also think December is a really cool name because you can say a lot of things without saying anything specific. December is obviously a really cold month so it kind of conjures up images of that as well. December also represents the end of a cycle and with that comes the beginning of something new. I think the band ended up kind of fitting into the name pretty well even if I didn't see that in the beginning.

I like the idea that the name doesn't offer up any preconceived notions of what the music is about.

Yea' that was definitely the idea. We don't want people to look at the band name or even our album cover and say, "Oh' it's just another death metal band." We don't want people to be able to prejudge us or pigeonhole us in any way.

Where does the title of this record come from?

Well the "Lament Configuration" was the name of Pinhead's box in the Clive Barker movie Hellraiser. It was the little toy box that opened the gates of hell. I've been a big fan of Clive Barker's and his novels and movies for quite some time and when we were writing the record I saw that name and thought it was amazing and told the guys we should use it. It sounded really cool and to date nobody had used it. I think it fits in with the album really well as the box kind of matches what we're doing in that if you looked at the box you wouldn't be able to guess what was inside it kind of like our name with our music.

> "I think we've proven we're not some porno grind band!"

Does your relationship with Matt Zane and his independent label Inzane Records factor in?

Yea' honestly it does. I think people have gotten over it now but when our record initially came out people saw Matt Zane on the press release and they grabbed onto it. The thing about Matt was that it was never about porn at all with him. Other than his last name, I didn't know who he was or a thing about him. He was just a guy starting up a record label and was into our music and when we talked to him, all we talked about was music. Our band had absolutely nothing to do with his whole porno thing and while we were on his label that came up, obviously, but then again, what do you expect? So it got a little frustrating, but now it's fine because I think we've proven we're not some porno grind band! (Laughs) Matt did a lot of great things for us and I have absolutely nothing bad to say about him.

So in retrospect do you think signing to Inzane Records was beneficial to December? You guys were in the "Loud Times" videos and a bunch of other places.

Well he put our record out and then we got the tour with SOD and then Crowbar who are one of my favorite bands. We did the Loud Times videos and Matt was pretty much instrumental to getting us this deal with Earache Records. Matt made sure we got a good time slot at this metal festival to make sure they were there and that our music was in their hands.

Why Earache Records? I'm sure there must have been interest from Hydrahead and Relapse Records.

Well there was talk with other labels, but for the most part Earache was the only label that stepped up and said, "Ok we want to sign you guys." Other labels more or less said they'd like to work with us, but never did anything about it where as Earache acted immediately. Earache was like, "This is what we want to do with you guys, and these are ideas and what we're thinking about." And then they flew out to see us play a show. It just seemed like Earache were really eager and they really wanted us, like the music, and seemed to understand us. They seemed to really believe in what December was all about, which is why we chose them as our label. They made us believe that they were the right label and so far they have been.

To quite a few people December is being looked at as the future of Earache Records in quite a few ways.

Yea' that's crazy! (Laughs) I've seen that in the press release and it's funny because I wouldn't even be listening to this type of music if it weren't for Earache Records. The fact that we're even signed to that label is pretty crazy to me but to have the US label boss say something like that, it's kind of intimidating, but at the same time reinforces what I said about them really believing in our band and what we're doing. If they didn't believe that then they wouldn't have made a statement like that. I think they're really trying to focus on their US acts and I think they're trying to gain some of the ground they lost over the past few years.

"Jewish people don't believe in me? We'll see about that" -Santa

Divit are destined for greatness. Oodles of reviews and articles swooning over the wonderful noise these San Fran youngsters make are being read as we speak. And the boys had the time and patience to A a few Q's about what it means to be a band, a golf term and about to go on tour.

smc: Divit has blown up recently, great reviews and articles all over the place. What would you attribute this recent success to?
Divit: I think a lot of it has to do with our last release being on Nitro Records. I think the Nitro name seams to grab people's attention. People want to see what their new projects are, and that's been really cool for us. Coldfront Records and Rise Records have also done an awesome job getting our name out there. We've really been lucky to have the opportunity to work with such cool people.

Does your name have anything to do with golf?
Ya, actually. Nick White's boss at the time had suggested Divit as a name. Apparently he was an avid golfer. We were stuck without a name at the time, and thought that it kind of sounded cool. I think it was a joke at first, but we stuck with it.

Has the historical (and recently resurgent) psychedelic San Francisco sound had any affect on Divit's music?
We all listen to a wide variety of music, and it's hard to say how much of it affects our music. It seams like the San Francisco scene of the 60's had a huge impact on rock music in general. So indirectly, I do think it had an affect on us. As for the last 10 years, the music from the Bay Area has had a huge impact on us. Berkeley and SF have produced a million amazing bands. We're lucky to have grown up in such a musically diverse area.

What band from the past would you most like to have seen live?
Zeppelin, Beatles, Jawbreaker, Nirvana, MC5, The Band, Sex Pistols, Iggy and The Stooges, The Clash...

Which bands currently impress you the most?
I saw International Noise Conspiracy a while back and they blew my mind. Orange Rhyming Dictionary by Jets to Brazil is an incredible album. Anything by them is great. Rival Schools hasn't left my stereo since I got it.

Football, basketball, baseball or hockey?
Baseball.

Describe the kind of music you make in five words or less without using the word 'rock'.
That's tough... wrenching, moving, expressive, straight-ahead, at times complex ...rock. Sorry, had to do it.

What's your favorite part of being in Divit?
The camaraderie is number one. We're all practically brothers. There's nothing like getting to play on stage, night after night. We're really lucky to be doing what we love.

Is Nitro a good fit for you guys?
Ya. Nitro has been great for us. There's a big sense of family with them that we dig. Whenever we're in SoCal we make it a point to stop by the office and say hi. Most bands don't have that kind of opportunity. Nitro is a pretty diverse label. They've got TSOL and The Damned to Stavesacre and Rufio. I feel like we fit in the lineup well.

Are you looking forward to touring?
Hell yes. I'd say we're definitely a touring band. It's all about hitting the stage and rocking out with your friends!

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December, continued

In the past few years, they haven't been signing your typical Earache sounding bands and I think we were the first band that they had signing in a while that sounded extreme again. I think that's where a lot of that statement comes from and I think they're trying to rebuild their roster to where when someone picks up an Earache record they know its gonna have that extreme sound to it.

At this point are you able to make a living off your music?
No. Not at all. We all still work our day jobs and we've come to realize it's all just part of the deal. We've all kind of gotten into jobs where we're able to tour and do whatever we need to do without causing too much of a problem with our personal lives.

Since the release of "The Lament Configuration" you guys have become road warriors.
Yea' we toured for about a third of this year. We've been away from home a long time and that's the most we've done in one big chunk. We get ready to leave again in February for the UK and Europe for a month. We're going to open for Stamping Ground and the Haunted, which is just amazing. Should be a great time as the bass player from Stamping Ground is kind of an Internet buddy of mine and he put out a split CD for us on his own label. We do that for a couple of weeks and then there is going to be an Earache tour that is being put together to go across Europe for a month. We can't wait because it's been a dream of ours to play over there for a while and I read all the magazines and things from over there and the scene is just very different.

How do you keep your vocal chords from blowing out while on tour?
I just really try to pay attention to how they're doing every day. The start of any tour is really the hardest part and those first few days are crucial but if I make it through those couple of shows without problems then the rest of the shows are fine. The biggest part for me is to make sure after shows I try not to do a lot of talking or get into conversations where I'm not yelling over loud music. I just try and be mindful of my voice and it helps that I don't smoke.

Do you think the extreme nature of December's music is limiting musically and prevents you from reaching a wider audience?
Yea' probably, but we don't sit down and try and write ourselves into a corner, but if it ever came down to us wanting to experiment a bit, I don't think we'd be afraid to do it. I don't think anyone in this band has any illusions of becoming a platinum selling band. We've all been doing this for so long, that if that were the case, then we all would have sold out a long, long time ago. It's just kind of about what we feel is right for us. We just started writing our new record and we'll have to see where that takes us. It will sound different, but it will still be same kind of genre musically. I think as far as mainstream success goes, you have a band like Slipknot, who aren't a grind band by any means but they are pretty heavy and have still sold a million records. I think that helps the scene overall and I think with bands like that, getting all this attention, kids will look at that and go, "Well I've heard Slipknot and I like that so what else is out there?" and hopefully they will be re-directed into other parts of the underground. I think that's kind of how everyone discovers the underground at some point and time. They see Anthrax on stage wearing SOD shirt and they think, "Well if Scott Ian listens to it then it can't be all that bad!"

Especially with the Internet taking over it makes everything a bit easier to just log on to the net and download some songs.
I chat online all the time and people are constantly telling me about bands I would never have heard about if not for the internet. There is some cool stuff out there and with the Internet it's easier to find it. I think the net is instrumental in helping bands be heard on just about every level unless you've attained a level of success where you don't need things like word of mouth. I think the Internet is just an incredible tool and it wasn't like that back in the old tape trading days. Now you can just download a song and hear it immediately and talk to people in real time. It's not a determent to a band at all.

"...they now realize they have to show bands with guitars again."

What do you think of the bands of extreme music in general right now?
I think there is some really good stuff coming out right now. There's always going to be good and bad music coming out, but I think most of things I've been hearing have been good. I think lately, there has been a movement towards a style I see a lot of bands doing, that kind of Swedish melodic death metal thing. I really did like it but now it seems like a ton of bands are doing that single line melodic guitar riff and jumping on the bandwagon. Then you have this whole polyrthymic movement that Messuggah started and I like the fact that it seems like a lot of bands are not borrowing from the mainstream but stuff that is more underground now. There are bands out there now like Candiria that are making an effort to do something really different. There is the whole Hydrahead movement and all the Trustkill bands that just add to all the good stuff out there that's going on right now. There are bands like Poison the Well and Killswitch Engage that are kind of breaking through to the mainstream and that's huge. More power to those bands like Hatebreed that are breaking through. Nobody can ignore what they've done and I think, in general, it just adds power to the overall metal scene. Hatebreed is a band we opened for in a small dingy little club here in Reno with about 70 kids showing up and at that time, they had already been on tour for a couple years in support of their debut but yet they still toured for a couple more after that. Now they're like huge and you have to respect that, but it also does nothing but help the other bands coming up behind them.

There seems to be a huge movement to push bands like Hatebreed and Messuggah into the mainstream.
It seems now, with MTV embracing the Osbourne's, it seems like MTV can no longer ignore good rock music. It seems like they now realize they have to show bands with guitars again. I have nothing against hip-hop or even pop music but it just seems like it's been so one-sided for so long that it's finally time for rock to come back around.

You guys seem to have gotten quite a bit of attention from Much Music in the US.
Yea' Much Music have been pushing our band really well. We actually just had our video shown on M2 again the other night in the same night as Shadows Fall and Lamb of God. Bands that you wouldn't have normally seen during the day but it was cool to see them at all.

Well I'm here in Canada and we're still fortunate enough to have heavy music outlets for music videos.
You guys are lucky! Think about it, down here, not everyone gets M2 and the only reason I do is because I have a satellite. Otherwise I wouldn't see any metal videos at all! There is no outlet for the average kid in America to see this kind of music. It's great that you guys have an outlet to see videos like this. We spent some time up in Canada, touring on this record, and it just seemed like the attitude towards this type of music was better than it is down here. To me it just seemed like people appreciated this type of music a little more. Maybe I'm just being a jaded American but that's what I thought.

You have blast beats and harsh vocals, yet at the heart of it all, there are still songs underneath. It's just not extreme music for the sake of being extreme.
Well that was kind of a conscious effort on our part. We don't sit down and try and write the craziest songs in the world because I think Dillinger Escape Plan already has everyone beat there. Even though I really enjoy that type of music, the problem with it is you'll listen to the record or see a show and you don't really leave holding onto anything because it's just a blur.

It seems like quite a few bands out there just try and kick you in the balls sonically for the sake of doing it.
What we wanted to do was just write a song. We wanted to have choruses and versus with parts that repeat so hopefully in the long run, it's still really extreme but there are still songs there.

So it's safe to say there will be no acoustic performances on this next tour?
I don't believe we will be! (Laughs) We're certainly not going to start writing love songs and singing, "Oh baby, baby!" (Laughs)

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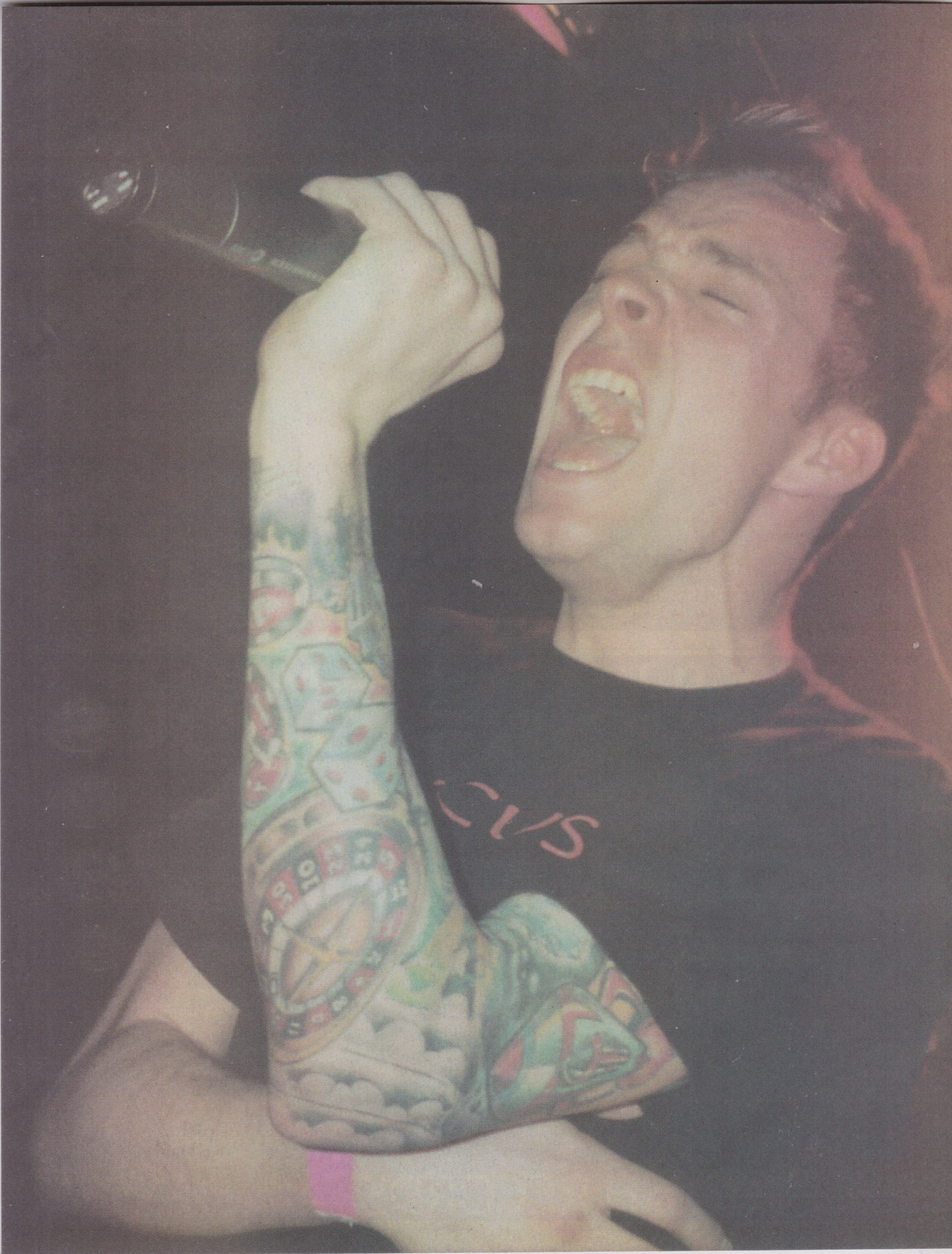
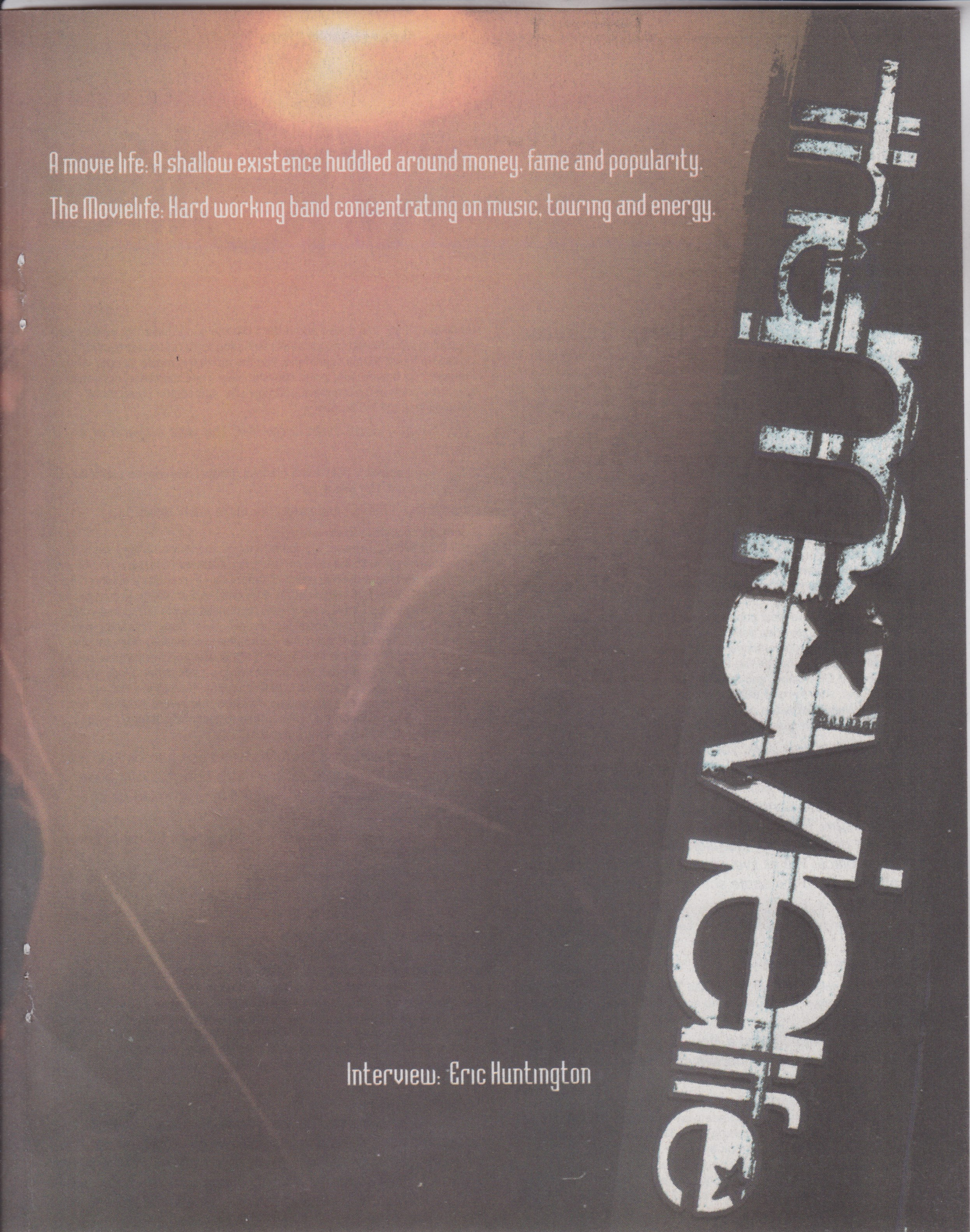


A movie life: A shallow existence huddled around money, fame and popularity.

The Movielife: Hard working band concentrating on music, touring and energy.



Interview: Eric Huntington

the movielife

In the Lake Erie-sized music industry, where every band represents a single drop of that aqua velvet abyss, what are the chances of pulling out a decent cup of music? Thousand to one? The Movielife is that aqueous material, the broth off of many notable New York hardcore and punk acts, and the elixir for music fans now looking for something with a punk, pop and hardcore mix.

"Sick of it All was a huge, huge, huge influence on me. It made me want to do this. At the same time, I was totally into Gorilla Biscuits, Youth of Today... they really molded me and made me into a person that loves punk rock and hardcore music"

says Vinnie Caruana, the voice of reason in Movielife. From an outsider, the east coast hardcore scene is quite alien, even after growing up in Southern California where punk acts like Circle Jerks and Bad Religion auscultated their ways into our ears and propagated thoughts of rebellion among the youths trying to fight off rumors of 'Generation X'. Out of nowhere, at least to the west coast, the east coast underground exploded with acts defining genre lines before they could finish albums. Sick of It All was the New York hardcore scene, as far as anyone was concerned. Also in the kids hands were bands like Gorilla Biscuits (who later fell apart, then formed Civ and Quicksand, and then fell apart), Judge and others. Music like Quicksand, slow tempos with menacing guitars given life by the thinking voice of Walter Schreifels was spawned. Is it surprising to see a surge of indie bands making names for themselves come out of New York?

"Growing up in New York, you get a flavor and influence that you can't get anywhere else. You just grow up with it, whether you like it or not. Look at the bands that come out of the same area, Long Island. Taking Back Sunday, Brand New, Glassjaw, From Autumn to Ashes and more. All these bands are doing well for themselves and they all come from the same place. We all live within 10 miles of each other. We all grew up in the same scene, and we're all influenced by the area."

Seeing your friends in bands with similar success make you jealous, or happy?

"It makes me very happy."

Listening to Movielife's first album, "It's Go Time," it displays the regional influence with the sounds of Quicksand enveloped inside songs about girls and friendships.

"Definitely. It definitely had a New York influence," explains Vinnie. "This new record that we just did, it has that same influence. It just tastes good."

From their birth in the very late 1990's, the band put out a few demos before landing their first album on Fadeaway Records. After that record, they moved onto Revelation, releasing "This Time Next Year". A moderately successful album that put them on the radar, creating hits like 'Self Destruct' and 'Single White Female', a song about a real friend of Vinnie's (now ex-) girlfriend who steals everything, literally. I often thought of that girl. What were her thoughts about the song? Was she aware of its existence and, if so, that it was about her? Did the song make her ponder reconciliation with the victims, or seek retribution for Vinnie's out casting? Does she haunt Vinnie's girlfriend, like the girl in the movie "Single White Female"? Or maybe sulk in the alleys of New York, mumbling nonsense about the price of ostrich meat and how she wished she could meet Ronald Reagan? He laughs,

"No, never. I don't even know her, she was a friend of a friend."

Still, I would probably hold some obvious grudge, and maybe pop a tire, if I was a crazy girl. Not one word?

"If anything, I think it just made her more intimidated. "

Damn, no cool stalking stories.

After their second release, Movielife returned to the road hitting small and large showcases with the likes of Thursday, Midtown, Glassjaw and others who have created a definite notch of fans; I can immediately tell the difference between the 2001 show at the Che Café in San Diego (a bad example of Movielife, as Vinnie's voice was hampered by the flu) to last years tour with Thursday. It's all about the first two rows. Sure, Thursday may attract a large crowd but everyone except the two rows up front stands around with their hands in their pockets. Row one and two are the true fan base; if they aren't with you, you haven't made it yet. When I saw Movielife opening up for Geoff's maniacal band, Thursday, he had the first two rows. Fuck, he had the first five. Of course, I'm sure there were Movielife fans who wouldn't move when the set changed to Thursday. With so many bands out there, is fan sharing inevitable?

"I think we can share. There's always going to be kids that want nothing to do with us, but that's how it is with every tour. It's cool that the open minded fans will give us a chance, though."

As a fan, that tour created some of the best two hours I'd listened to in a while. Must have been a great tour, yeah?

"Amazing!" exclaims Vinnie. "Thursday is so cool to us. We had the opportunity to take them with us to Europe, and they had the opportunity to take us through the US. It was an awesome tour."

Certainly, it has helped them now that they share a label with some of those with the shared fan base. The Drive Thru EP release of "Movielife has a Gambling Problem" was a different train than the one they were used to riding on. More pop lines mixed with the same lyrical styles of, "This Time Next Year" came to welcome arms of some fans, while others harped at the lighter sound, creating vibes of "This is what happens when you sign to Drive Thru." as if there's a pill they make you swallow. Obviously, that's not true but something was very different. What happened on that album?

"Well, okay, we were on tour for about a year." Explained Vinnie, (a bit disturbed by the question). "See, we wrote about five songs, ran and recorded them, and then ran back on tour. That's not the way to make an album. You've got to sit down, write songs, and throw songs out. You know, really do an album. We know that now. Our last full release was

in 2000. It's 2003 now, and so much stuff has happened as a band since then, you know?"

Yeah, but does quick song writing make things poppy? The album was quite different then the faster, harder Movielife fans had originally embraced.

"That shit came out really poppy. I liked it, but after the fact, after we made it, I wished we didn't come out like that. This new record, this is the record we meant to make. We spent a lot of time writing it, and a lot of time recording it to get it right."

Were you happy that the Gambling CD was an EP, and not a full-length album?

"Oh, yeah."

If there's one thing that the Movielife is well known for by their peers, it's touring. Practically non-stop touring. Currently in Cleveland, Vinnie and I quickly chatted after immediately finishing their set.

What do you do now?

"First thing I do is just sit here, like, the total opposite of what I do on stage. I just give every ounce of my soul on stage, and then I get off and just sit, like a vegetable. Everyone's like, "You okay?" I'm just like, "Yes". I just want to sit here and be normal. I like to sit there and relax, just for a second or two."

How did you feel your set went? I mean, can you gauge doing well?

"Yeah, it was fucking amazing," breathes Vinnie, still trying to get his wind back. "This tour has been insane. Seriously, this is the best tour experience we've had. Our record is coming out really soon, and we're really starting to feel the energy from the kids and how excited they are about the record, and you can feel that energy. It's so cool to see people rallying and getting as excited as us."

Hopefully, the rest of the tour will be this exciting. You've got a few more shows left; then what happens?

"We go home, and then were back on tour again."

Which, for those on the west coast, will include Finch and Static Lullaby.

Speaking of touring, nothing pleases the food concur like exotic food. While Cleveland may not be exotic, it's certainly a change of palate compared to other cities.

Which town makes an immediate impact as a good place to eat?

"Any place that sells egg sandwiches is my favorite place in the world and" Vinnie laughs, "any place that sells hot dogs and egg sandwiches is good with me."

Hmm. You mean hot dogs AND egg sandwiches, combined?

"And/or man, and/or."

And what about the latest trend of fucking the fan? I'm not talking about groupie sex, although Vinnie swears off that, even with the heavy female fan base of The Used mixing in with the Movielife crowd.

"There definitely is. It's really about half and half, though." defends Vinnie. "Plenty of dudes moshing it up though. But I don't play that rock star game, you know, hooking up with groupies. All that shit is fantasy, and no one on this tour does it either, trust me. I know there are girls that love our band, but it's for the same reasons that guys do, you know?"

But the groupies, Vinnie, the groupies. Don't you break them off with some love? That band look is all the rage; tattoos and heartbreak and shit. Vinnie laughs,

"Um, well, that's what you say. But that groupie shit is

beyond us; it's bullshit and has nothing to do with me. It's a different world to me."

But going past that, the screwing of the fan often takes place at the record store, where fans fork out heavy bills for a piece of plastic (.25 at Frys Electronics), piece of paper (.10 cents) and a CD (.21 cents). Hell, even without Frys, you can't help but notice the prices for CD duplication in advertisements catering to bands. So who is making that $16.99 price? Are the bands greedy? Is it the label? The store? Or is it something else all together?

"Okay, this is what I think," explains Vinnie, laying it out for the rest of us. "The more people download CDs from the Internet, the higher CD prices are going to be. Record companies are trying to over compensate for the fact that people are stealing from them. As far as I'm concerned, yo, if you love the music, love the music. I don't care how you get the fucking music. As long as you come out, have a good time at the shows, I don't care." He pauses, reflecting on his own words. "I think everyone realizes we don't make crazy money off this stuff; the only thing that's important to us is that people come to our shows, have a good time and relate to our music, you know what I mean? If they don't have the money... I mean, we're lucky to be on Drive Thru, because they keep the prices mad low which is real cool

because sometimes I go to buy a CD and it's $18.99, you know what I mean? I don't think a CD should be over $12.99, which is cool because I wouldn't be buying a CD for more then that. I mean, everyone knows you can go get shit on the Internet, but you might not get all the songs, but whatever. Either way, you can get the music, so it's cool."

So, should we start a protest outside the office building of the huge cooperate CD selling website Amazon.com when you find them selling the Revelation records release for $14.99?

"I knew that was coming," laughs Vinnie. "I know, it doesn't need to be that much. I know how much those CD's cost. Record stores mark up shit like crazy, and smaller labels can't really control that. It seems like stores need to make as much as they can, I guess, and they mark shit up. And a lot of times record labels have a hard time regulating that. We don't have much to do with it. Kids have to realize, they can come to any of our shows and buy any of our CD's for $10. You can buy our EP for $5. Come out to the show, chill with us, meet the band, get our music cheap."

Do you go record shopping, spending your hard earned cash on other artists? Is there a limit?

"When I pick up a CD that's $18.99, I put that shit down, you know? We're lucky enough to be in a situation where our CD's are at a reasonable price, so people that don't rob banks can afford us."

True that, my friend. I like the record industry concept that they're overcompensating for downloads, meaning that yeah, maybe they should be doing something but, with the prices now, they're going way overboard.

With the internet, music availability and corperate greed, radio has all but disappeared as a meal to serve the hungry consumer; does radio airplay factor in Movielife's vision?

"Right now, no." says Vinnie. "We're touring, and that's how we're supporting the new record. I know we've gotten play on college radio stations, which is way cool, but right now we're on a small level and radio just isn't' a concern. We haven't even made a video yet, although we're going to."

But wait, this wouldn't be your first video, yeah? I remember seeing an older video on the Internet, which looked like it was filmed in a tiny apartment.

"Well, yeah we did make one before. It was low budget. Too low budget, really. This new video is going to be out first real video." Commenting about the current video Vinnie explains "We're shooting a video for, 'Face or Kneecaps' that's going to be made in England, for England, but it might get some airplay in the US."

Is there an expected return from videos your label expects?

"We're a touring band. That's how we sell records. We're not trying to be radio stars, but if something gets on there we're cool with it." With his stance obvious, Vinnie reiterates, "We have never written a Movielife song with the intention of radio play, or to be big rock stars. That shit usually never happens anyway. We're a touring band and that's what we're going to keep doing, you know?"

We brought up New York's Gorilla Biscuits earlier, who later broke up and semi-evolved into Civ, a decent group who made one track, "Can't Wait One Minute More" completely different and "radio friendly" as compared to the other songs on their debut album, creating cries of "radio song!" and proceeded to make some decent sales off the moderate airplay on MTV. Do you think there is any truth to a band that 'makes' a radio hit? Is it that easy to sell out? Is it even possible?

"That's bullshit" shrugs off Vinnie. "I wouldn't even know how to write a hit song. It's so weird these days. Thursday gets on MTV. They're selling all these records and the music is clearly not commercial. Kids are just feeling the music. It's one thing to have a shitty song and have radio/mtv play for it, but the kids can smell that (cooperate) shit from a mile away, you know?"

We talked about Glassjaw earlier, who, for those that don't know, you/Movielife are good friends with. Will the Movielife ever take that friendship on the road on a serious tour with Glassjaw?

"Daryl's (singer of Glassjaw) a really good friend of mine. I'm sure one day Movielife and Glassjaw will be out together on tour."

For band friends, you've got pretty different sounds.

"Glassjaw's in a niche genre of their own, doing all sorts of crazy shit" compliments Vinnie. "Daryl listens to zero type of music that Glassjaw plays. 99% of the music he listens to underground New York shitty hip-hop. It's bizarre, the sound that Glassjaw makes when you listen to what Daryl does. But that's what makes them Glassjaw."

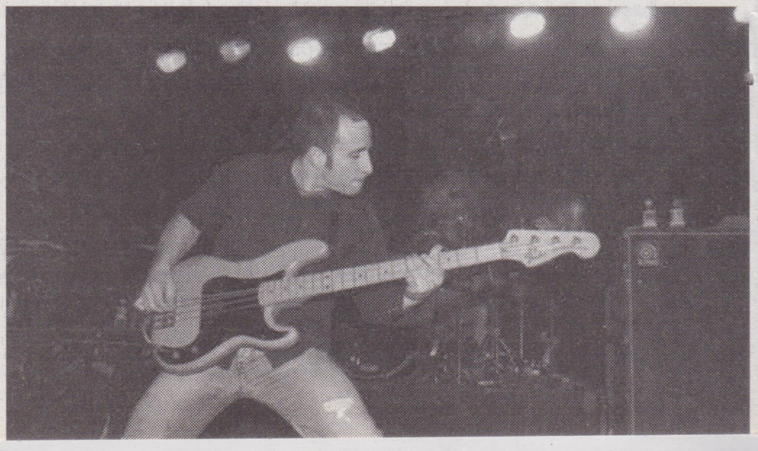
Speaking of band friendships, you've got a good voice. Would you ever do guest vocals for other bands, Glassjaw or otherwise?

"Actually" Vinnie whispers, "me and Daryl have a band together, and we plan on making a record and doing a tour. We wrote some music while I was home, so people should keep their eyes and ears out for that."

Whoa, that's fucking cool. Too bad Vinnie wouldn't elaborate, but he did pass on the band name: *"It's H.A."*

Vinnie, do you remember watching shelter with Daryl and me at the Warped Tour, after the Glassjaw interview? For those that didn't see, and not to pick on Shelter, as they were a great band in their prime and shall be missed, but their set was... less then memorable. Only two original members were in the band, and you could tell. The crowd didn't seem to feel it though, even for the older songs where I caught myself singing along. But anyways, not to bring that shit up again, but let me ask a question: do you think bands should play forever, or should there be a set limit on a bands age?

"I think a band knows when they need to stop, and a lot of times they do," explains Vinnie. "You'll see bands run their



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shit into the ground, and you can tell they're going to break up any second. Yeah, I remember watching Shelter at the LA warped tour. I have all the respect for that band. When you lose members, you have problems with fan base, and, I don't know, when that happens to me I'll be, talk to me then." Vinnie laughs.

Speaking of ex-members, I remember the last member that 'went through' Movielife seemed to get off on a bad note, at least from the vibe I felt. Not to talk shit, but does your ex-guitarist have a band? What happened with that? It sounded like you guys weren't getting along with the direction of a band. Was his leaving the only solution? Does he have a band yet?

"I have no idea. We left on good terms. Well, we left on good terms, those terms didn't stay that way for a while. But now we're cool with him. I honestly haven't heard anything from or about him for a while."

Our final conversation involves something everyone should be concerned about: our impending war with Iraq. Not since the Vietnam War have there been this many protests in America against war. And that's AFTER a possibly Iraq-linked terrorist attack hit out soil (although the 'link' connecting that to Iraq is shoddy at best). Not to mention the protests in other countries. Luckily, our non-majority elected president isn't stirred, and is determined keep fucking with the whole middle east. As long as it means securing that black gold. Yeah, it's all about oil, people. Not to go on a rant, but do you honestly think that, aside from the 'problems' we should be correcting there (like civil rights, Hussein, etc) it's NOT about the oil? Would we give two fucks about that entire area if we weren't oil dependent?

"I don't think we would give a fuck at all. And when I say we, I meant the US government" theorizes Vinnie.

And he is absolutely right.

"You won't find me talking about politics ever, but when it gets to this point, it effects us all."

And the media hasn't been too helpful, with talks about color levels and duct tape feeding peoples anxiety.
Do you pay attention to the news?

"I do read the paper every day, and I got to say, I am not in support for this war" Vinnie firmly says. "It's real tough, because I love being American, which is something many people take for granted. I think the people that attacked us on September 11th need to get fucked, but at the same time, it's turning into some oil fight. I don't want to go to war. I don't want my loved ones getting hurt. I want love. I'm always on tour, and I don't want shit to happen while I'm away, you know? If shit goes down, I want to be home. I am against the war, if that's what you're asking."

Here's a tired question, and probably something that's always in the back of your mind. Are you worried about an attack on NY?

"It's funny, because people do ask me that shit. You have to understand; every single week we get issued warnings and shit. People don't know about that because they don't live in New York, but it's constantly there. There's a terrorist threat, something's going to go down in the next few days, and it doesn't happen." Vinnie pauses, then sighs. "I think shit is going to go down, and I don't want it to. It sucks, but it's going to happen. I really don't want it to. It's nothing new though, the threats. Every week, another bullshit warning." Where were you, on that September day? "We were on tour in Connecticut. We saw that shit on TV, piled in the van, and drove to Long Island and was back in the house by like, 2 in the afternoon, and tried to get in touch with our loved ones. It was a tough time, tough. Really difficult."

Well, enough seriousness. Turn off the television, remove the duct tape from the door and go see the Movielife when they come to town. Hell, maybe buy a CD or something. Vinnie, you got a final message you want to get out?

"Thank you for taking the time, man. Everyone check out the record, it's going to be a good thing."

Footnote: I did find, post interview, that Lumberjack www.lumberjack-online.com is selling their "This Time Next Year" CD for 12.50, noticeably lower priced then Amazon.com. Might want to check them out.

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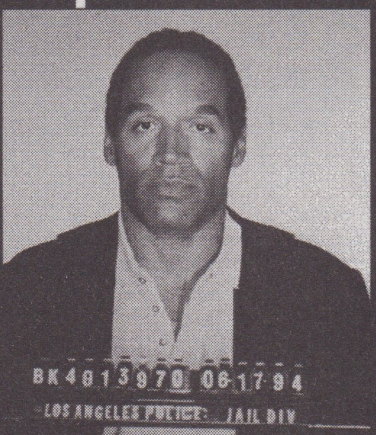

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Label Stuff

Labeler Deluxe Edition
(Sure Thing)

So you burn CDR's huh? Tired of writing on the disc with a pen? Sure Thing makes this neat little box with a few key things to relieve your writing hand. For $39.95, you get a kit that includes everyting you need to make... decent labels for your CD's. No, we're not talking professional; those are printed directly onto the disc. This is a labeling system; the sticky kind. You'll need any type of PC with Windows on it, and obviously some porn, err, school work CD's to label. The setup includes two stompers, a bunch of labels to get started (although seriously not enough for the pack rate type of CD burner hobbiest), software and a manual. Installation is pretty simple, and the sheets work with just about any printer. We have a black and white laser printer, so when I actually got around to making labels, they didnt look as cool as the ones pictured on the box. Oh well. Don't buy this thinking your going to start a CD labeling plant for local bands; this setup is more for people who like to make CDR's for others, and perhaps bands to label masters and personal copies of their work.
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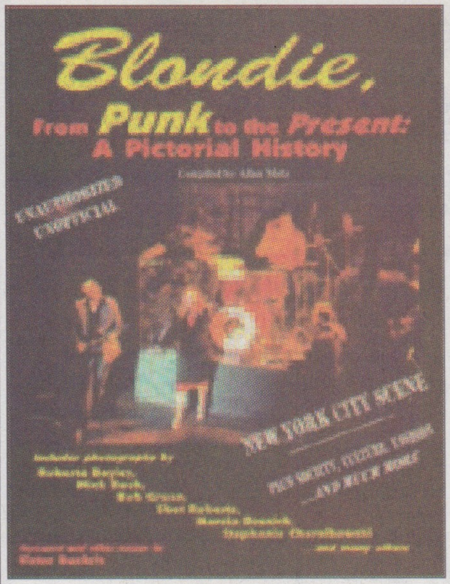
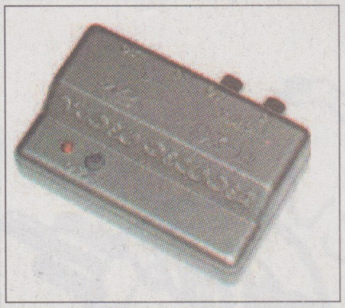


Allan Metz "Blondie, from Punk to the Present"
(Musical Legacy Publications)

This book is a tour-de-force exegesis of the entire Blondie career and the effect lead singer Deborah Harry has on the role of the blonde female vocalist in pop and rock. Nearly the first third of the book is given over to the punk milieu from which Blondie sprang and Blondie's role in that scene. This makes the book a fascinating overview of the nascent New York City punk scene. Like the rest of the book, several authors contribute pieces of no more than a few pages. This makes for much redundancy as the same topics are covered, but treat this book as casual reading and reference and the many points of view coalesce into detailed complete if kaleidoscopic view of the territory. In here are some real nuggets, like the uncensored interview of Harry for High Times and cross interview with Nina Persson of The Cardigans. There are plenty of photos from all parts of the Blondie/Deborah Harry history and some interviews with the photographers. "Part IV: In Retrospect" contains discographies from the U.S. and U.K. perspectives along with many pages of appreciations from various authors. Metz gives a short synopsis of each article explaining how it fits in. The book is a must for the Blondie fan and adds much to those that are interested in the NYC punk landscape she grew out of.
http://www2.drury.edu/ametz/blonbook.htm

Tom "Tearaway" Schulte

Unscramble Signals



Video Decoder
(Easy Buy 2000)

As some of you may or may not be aware, you can't copy a DVD straight onto a VHS tape. This is a 'security measure' implemented by the entertainment industry to prevent piracy; in reality, it enhibits onto your rights. When you purchase a movie, you own a personal copy and can do certain things to it. One of those is to make a copy (in case you lose the other, or whatever) of it. DVD's use a feature called Macrovision, which basically fucks up the video feed so you can't record it. This little baby fixes all that. It's as easy to use as anything, since they're only four steps. Step one: plug A/V (it accepts S Video too) cables from DVD player into input. Step two: plug A/V cables from vcr input into output of the Video Decoder. Step three: plug Video Decoder wire into electric socket. Step four: turn on Decoder. That's it. A red light on the box comes on, but it's just as easy to tell when you can actually see the video that you recorded. Cool product for $15.99.
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Drawing comparisons to bands as varied as Coalesce, Neurosis, and Pig Destroyer, they combine elements of all forms of extreme music.

The Mindfreak That Is Criss Angel

Interview By Mary Ellan

You may have seen him on a TV special at some point in the past few years, since practically every popular network and cable channel has included him in programs about the Art Of Illusion. In addition, he was named Magician Of The Year in 2001. His special, "Criss Angel - Mindfreak," has been running on the ABC Family channel since before Halloween. The special covers everything from his street magic, to his sold out "Mindfreak" show (playing at the World Underground Theater in New York City since December, 2001 through 01/06/03), to his latest stunt entitled "Submerged," which took place from 08/26 through 08/27/02, as he re-created the famous Houdini "Water Torture Cell" stunt with a BIG twist in NYC's Times Square. When he exited the Chamber (with a World Record) after being submerged for 24 hrs., then having his air supply taken away while he freed himself from his shackles and escaped from the tank, he was mentioned on every network news show and featured in publications all over the world.

Although best known for his magic, escapes and stunts, Criss Angel is a musician first. The rest of his considerable performance talents have been added over the years. After reading everything I could find about him and interviewing him for an hour, I've barely scratched the surface of all there is to know about this guy. However, what I did not find was emphasis placed on his music until I actually spoke to Criss. He has released 5 albums on APITRAG Records (his label), four of which are available on his web site ("System 1," "System 2" and "System 3 In The Trilogy" and the "Mindfreak" soundtrack), www.crissangel.com or by calling 1-800-ANGEL-99. ALL songs were written, produced, arranged, performed (including vocals) and mixed by Angel and his oft time industrial music collaborator Klayton. On the subject of APITRAG, Criss told me: "I will never as an artist be put in the position where I'm told how it has to be done. For me, having artistic control is one of the most important things. The ability to live in a technological age that allows one to create, develop and sell product quickly and cost effectively, without having to deal with a record company mentality, is why I created APITRAG. Freedom to create and get it out. Eventually I will find other artists who will be signed if they have that special something I want to back."

Criss began his odyssey as a musician at the age of 6 playing drums. His brother was a musician and had a variety of bands, so he was the first musical influence on young Criss. At age 10, Angel became fascinated with magic, which is when he began to study his second love, the art of illusion. In addition, he also mastered martial arts, dance and pyrotechnics and acquired his state and federal explosive licenses at the earliest legal age. When he was about 16 he decided to leave the drums and front his successful NYC band, which put him a new position as a songwriter. He has always composed his own music and lyrics. At that time in his life he sidelined magic because " . . .nobody thought it was cool. I was old school and played in bands. I actually played out in NYC for many years and the music on the 'System Trilogy' was written a long time ago and performed at club gigs." Although the "System Trilogy" albums sound like loops and over-dubs and electronic tracks, it actually isn't. There is no programming and no computer. Angel explained. "I do broad strokes and then go back and fill in the details. I do tapes of stuff for different parts and then collaborate and mix with various people." His current show, "Mindfreak," has to have a soundtrack for space reasons (the theater is small and so is the stage) but he prefers live music to accompany his visuals.

When I asked how he got started with the combination of his music and magic, he told me: "I love the art of magic, but I was looking for a way to make it more contemporary and give people an experience they've never had before. I want to put the art of magic into our times. My music stands on its own and so does the magic. Then I combine them both. I'm creating a unique brand of entertainment and want the audience to connect emotionally to each moment. I want the lines between reality and illusion to be blurred. There was no model for me to follow, because none of this has been done before. I'm the producer, director and performer and pretty much do it all. Then I bring in experts for the parts I'm don't know about to get the best possible product in the end." The experts who assisted in putting together "Mindfreak" are indeed a stellar lot, including production design by John Farrell (countless theater productions and Radio City's Spring and Christmas Spectaculars), movement consultation by renowned choreographer Debra Brown (Cirque Du Soleil's O, Mystere and Quidam), creature design and construction by the award-winning Steve Johnson (Species, The Abyss, Men In Black, Blade) and lighting design by Tony Award winners Jules Fisher and Peggy Eisenhauer.

The Mindfreak Soundtrack ". . .is the aural version of Angel's supernatural freak show. . .Like its visual, 'Mindfreak's' audio component is a dramatic opus that weaves layers of haunting electronic and organic textures with infectious melodies." After reading this I asked Angel about the creative process that brings together the aural and visual parts of an illusion. As most artists do, he replied "I do what comes to me. Usually it's the illusion first and I create the music to back it. I do what it takes to make the music match the illusion. But sometimes music will inspire the visual. I have an advantage because I can create and combine both art forms."

My last question was "How do all your various talents interact to make up Criss Angel the person?" His answer, "My life is all about passionate commitment and what I absorb myself in. I try to find out about things I'm interested in. I'm somebody very committed and thick-skinned and I will conquer whatever I put my mind to. Mind, body and spirit work as one, then comes anything else. Whether it's hanging from hooks or writing music, I will spend as much time as necessary to complete it."

When asked about fellow illusionist David Blaine, Angel says, "I can appreciate his achievements, but I honestly think the people would love to see who the true provocateur of the 21st century is - so I invite him to any challenge, anytime, anywhere, side by side!"

That is something I'd really like to see!

John Edwards is gay.

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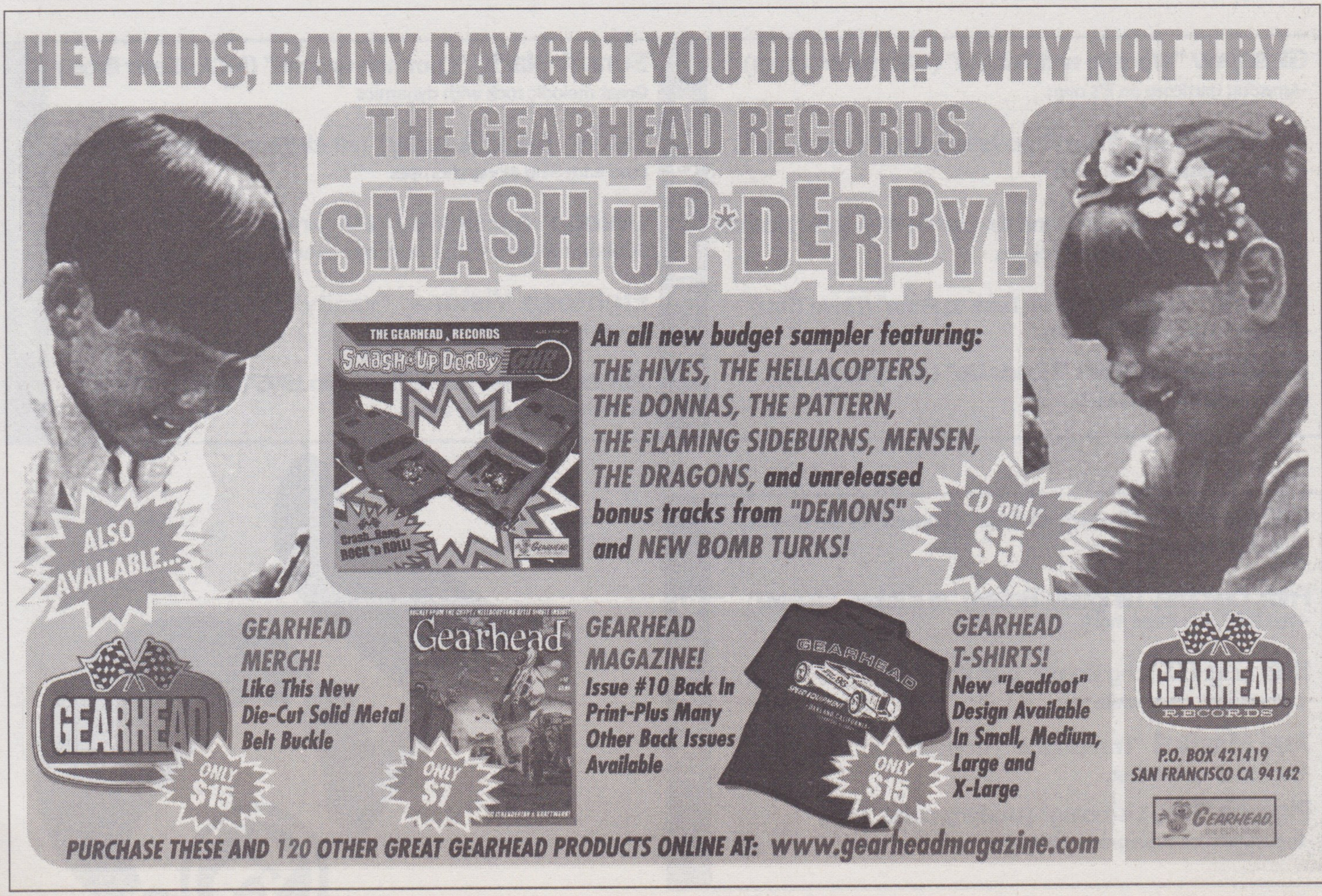
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The Firebird Band "Setting Sun and it's..." (Headhunter)
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Warsaw Pack "Gross Domestic Product" (G7 WC)
-Canadian jazz infected rap flows

Haymarket Riot "Bloodshot Eyes" (Divit Records)
- Intelligent crafty indie-rock deconstructed hooks

Dew Scented "Inwards" (Nuclear Blast America)
- German thrash Bay Area style.

Scissorfight "Mantrapping for Sport and Profit" (Tortuga)
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PETER SOYER

Interpol "Turn on the Bright Lights" (Matador)
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The New Pornographers "Mass Romantic" (Mint)
Better than the old pornographers.

Broken October "EP" (Noise Floor)
Guide to crushing your heart.

DICK

Destruction "Eternal Devesatation" (Nuclear Blast)
-Succculent rip-roarin' Teutonic thrash kings

Killdozer "Little Baby Buntin'" (Touch and Go)
-Painfully heavy working class ballads

Immortal "Sons of Northern Darkness" (Nuclear Blast)
-Visciously cold, overtly Nordic hymnals

Meet The Virus "Self-titled" (Know Records)
-Hard-hitting, heartfelt disestablishmentarian Pissed-off punk

Residents "Fingerprince" (East Side Digital)
-Peculiar dissonance meets childish abandon

TOM MAXWELL

Death Cab For Cutie "You Can Play These..." (Barsuk)
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Pedro The Lion "Control" (Jade Tree)
Dark, crunching rock with angelic vocals.

Jawbreaker "Etc." (Blackball)
Rarities from emo-core gods!

The Gloria Record "Start Here" (Arena Rock)
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The Postal Service "Give Up" (Sub Pop)
Ben Gibbard's electro-pop alter ego.

ERIC HUNTINGTON

Glassjaw "Worship and Tribute" (Warner Brothers)
-Amazing hardcore on it's own.

Blood Brothers "Burn Piano Island, Burn" (ArtistDirect)
-It's like Glassjaw, except not.

Pogues "Rum, Sodomy and the Lash" (Wea International)
-Can't drink Guiness without Pogues.

Movielife "Forty Hour Train Back to Penn" (Drive Thru)
-This isn't your fathers Movielife.

Death from Above "Heads Up" (Ache Records)
-Rocky indie from la Canada.

JAMES WRIGHT

Sunset Black "Common Ground" (MCA/Bieler Bros.)
Great melodic rock with dynamics

Taking Back Sunday "Tell All Your Friends" (Victory)
Emo with Sing along choruses

Unloco Becoming I (Maverick)
Sophomore effort that destroys everything

Eighteen Visions "Vanity" (Trustkill)
Great Hardcore for V.O.D fans

James Brown "Live At The Apollo 1995"(Attic/ScottiBros.)
Godfather of soul, nuff said!

TOM SHULTE

Creme Blush "Basket of Bets" (Industrial Strength)
-Duo that is seriously '80s.

Frith, Derome, Tanguay, Boisen "All is Bright..." (DAME)
-Fred Frith plus three more.

Bob Log III "Log Bomb" (Fat Possum)
-Delta blues - crazy white boy.

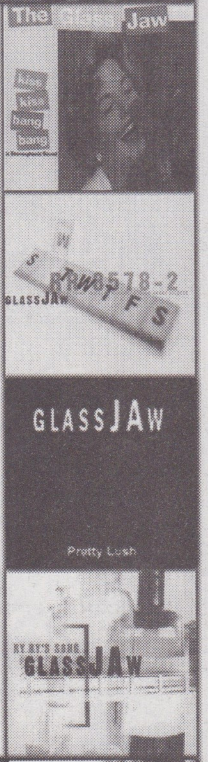
Joni Mitchell "Travelogue" (Nonesuch)
-Her best done the best.

Pigface "Easy Listening" (Underground, Inc.)
-Industrial rock supergroup with style.

gj

at soma.
with
dredg
sparta
& hot water music.
02.18.2003

by pr.



Another night, another crowd blown away by the band that is **Glassjaw**. We got to Soma late. Way late. The show listing mentioned something about 7:30pm, so I assumed that meant when the club opened, as is the norm. Wrong. By the time I found my way into the renovated movie cinema complex turned Soma, **Dredg** was all but a tiny memory in some white belt's eyes, and **Hot Water Music** hit their last chord as I entered the main stage arena. Fucking lame. I stood dauntless with the other thousand sheep who were there either because they enjoyed a band, or dude, it's like, SnoCore, brah. Rad.

I gots to admit, Glassjaw's one of the my favorite bands, hands down. Their musical approach, at some times, cinematic, so maybe that's why the irony of playing inside a movie theater is justified.

Glassjaw enters, and just fucks it up. Everything sounds good, and Daryl, the vocalist, is in a good mood tonight. Lots of jokes between band members on long riffs or in breaks. He handles himself well with the vocals on the slower tracks (so did the crowd) and holds nothing back for the favorites, like "Pretty Lush", an awesome straight edge tune off of their first record on Roadrunner. Some 40 minutes went by, and then they were gone. Damn.

Sparta took the stage, a band "with everyone except for the two afro guys of **At the Drive In**" says Bushman. I tried to get a good photo, but couldn't. Musically, I wasn't very impressed, as these guys are supposed to be the shit, or something. But then again, I didn't like that kind of music that At the Drive In played anyways. Not that they sound like that, but they certainly weren't tingling my ears. So I left.

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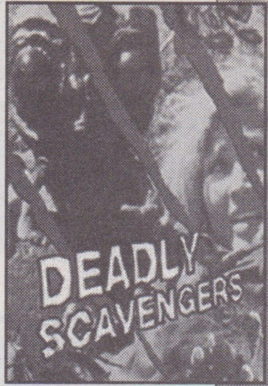
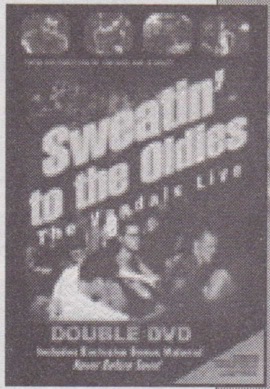


This film combines all the elements of a sci-fi action film: guns and explosions, over-skilled anti-heroes, monsters. The story has good content features: subplots, complicated love interest and foreshadowing (watch for the close-ups on the dog tag). The tale of man-eating cockroaches loosed from a scientist's lab wants to be a cult classic but it lacks the rampant stylism (Rocky Horror Picture Show) or focused, fast-paced story telling (Evil Dead) that makes for a timeless classic. Still, fans of H.G. Lewis will appreciate the over-the-top garage-made gore and B-movie fans with Joe Bob Briggs' taste will appreciate a titty count greater than the monster could and a very high body count relative to the cast. That is, all but a handful buys the farm during this 88-minute escapade. www.pandadigital.com

Tom "Tearaway" Schulte

The Vandals
"Sweatin' to the Oldies: The Vandals Live"
(Kung Fu Films)



This fully packed double-DVD collection is built around a release of the group's hour-long VHS documentary. The first disc of the VHS's material now has an additionally audio track of the band's own commentary on each part of the documentary and concert video. Not only do we see live footage of the group performing such songs as "Urban Struggle (I Want to be a Cowboy)" and "Anarchy Burger", but we find the real story behind "Pat Brown". Or do we? The interview with the singer of the South Bay Surfers on the second disc seems to cast doubt on all that, or is it all in good fun? Good (but not necessarily) clean fun is had by all The Vandals on this DVD set. Also on the second disc is a hilarious analysis by the band of their own audience getting into the show and the totality of Joe Escalante's interview of Bjork and Siggi of The Sugarcubes.
www.kungfurecords.com

Tom "Tearaway" Schulte

Sublime
"Live '94 to '96"
(Cornerstone Recording Arts Society)

Life just doesn't get much better than this. Brand new fan made videos of one of modern music's classic acts Sublime and unlike you sappy suckers I get that shit for free. Towards the end of the Sublime saga I had a falling out with the band because this stupid ass kid from Lon Island was really into them. The problem I had was that this kid was a skinny punk ass fucker with a New York accent that wore those god awful sandals with the straps over the top and clothes five sizes too big from JCPenny's. This kid was the biggest freaking dork I had ever seen and he was religious about Sublime, even though he only started listening to them after the band had sold millions of records. Brad if your out there suck a big fat cock you pussy ass bitch, I should have kicked your sorry ass when I had the chance. Well, now that that's out of my system, Sublime is absolutely amazing on this video. I still think they are one of the best live bands I have ever seen. CRAS really hooked it up with the song selection too, a few of the featured tracks include "KRS-One," "40 Oz. To Freedom," "Saw Red," "Let's Go Get Stoned" and in the bonus footage they got Bradley singing a karaoke version of "Get Ready" which segues into "Pawn Shop" at a High Times benefit. The High Times footage is spectacular because it has all of these images of pot and pot being smoked and footage of old cannabis canisters. The band is smoking some fat blunts in the middle of the set. The only complaint I have is that "Jailhouse" is the only song where Brad is skinny (HaHa). Trust me, you have to see this shit, it's a fucking national treasure!
www.cornerstoneras.com

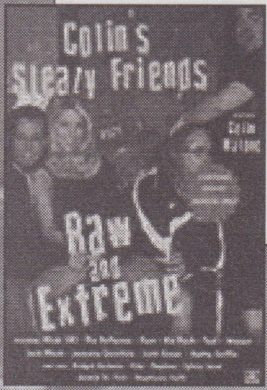
Tom

Bruce Lee
"The Legend Lives On..."
(Waterfall Home Ent.)

This DVD documentary explores the impact of Bruce Lee on the role of kung fu in the movies through interviews with several people. Many of these people were students at Bruce Lee's school. They augment the personal exposition that is anything but glorification but rather an intimate portrayal of a man that had advanced to phenomenal athletic abilities and loved to express that, as well as fight. In many ways, Bruce Lee comes across much like Harry Houdini, a superhuman of sorts whose greatest feats are still legendary and unable to be reproduced. Lee's brother and son also give interviews as well as the late actor James Coburn (a student) and Jackie Chan, perhaps Lee's closest modern day equivalent. The DVD indulges the viewer with a few of Lee's longer fight scenes in their entirety. www.musicvideodistributors.com

Tom "Tearaway" Schulte

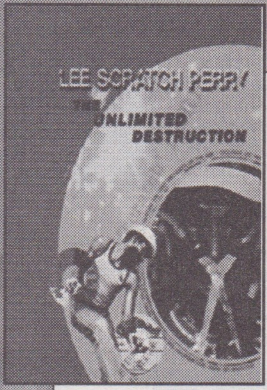
Colin's Sleazy Friends
"Raw and Extreme"
(MVD)



Waste of fucking time. This DVD sucks. The cover is just a bunch of empty promises. Never buy anything made by Colin. Terrible clips of him attempting to be a interviewer. Still photographs of Colin standing next to musical stars acting like a fuckstick. Who cares about that? "Raw and Extreme" my ass. DO NOT BUY.

PR!

Lee "Scratch" Perry
"The Unlimited Destruction"
(Jet Star)



This 45-minute DVD documentary is a colorful and personal portrait of The Upsetter, dub architect Lee "Scratch" Perry. Much of the interviewing occurs in Perry's home where we see he is, apparently, never out of costumer and never out of character. Perry's home is as eclectically decorated to match his apparel. Subtitles would have been helpful for Perry's thick accent, but it is worth straining to hear him expound his Sun Ra-like philosophies and comments on working with Bob Marley. Some concert clips are here also.
http://www.musicvideodistributors.com

Tom "Tearaway" Schulte

Ozzy Osbourne
"Crown Prince of Darkness"
(Chrome Dreams)

This is an unauthorized biography of Ozzy's career, so it contains no music. However, it does contain much that is revealing about this powerful persona in heavy metal. Mostly through the interviews of a journalist and two authors on Ozzy books, we learn about Ozzy's crimes and misdemeanors, his highs and lows and his rather unexpected current acceptability. For instance we find out things popularly known about Ozzy, say urinating on the Alamo, biting the head off a bat or wearing a dress to a photo shoot, but also the events of that time or that day that led up to those events.
www.musicvideodistributors.com

Tom "Tearaway" Schulte

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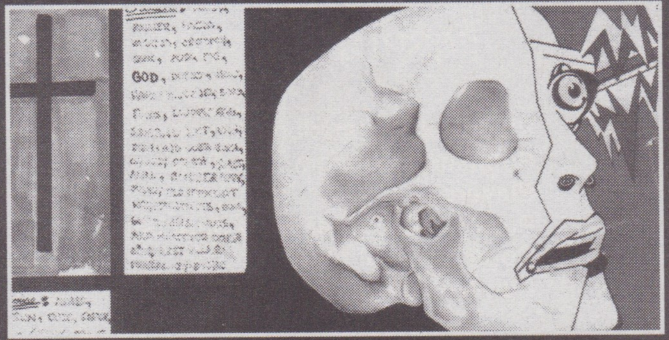

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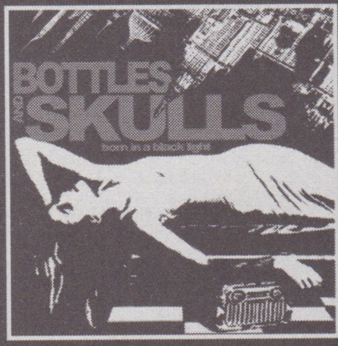

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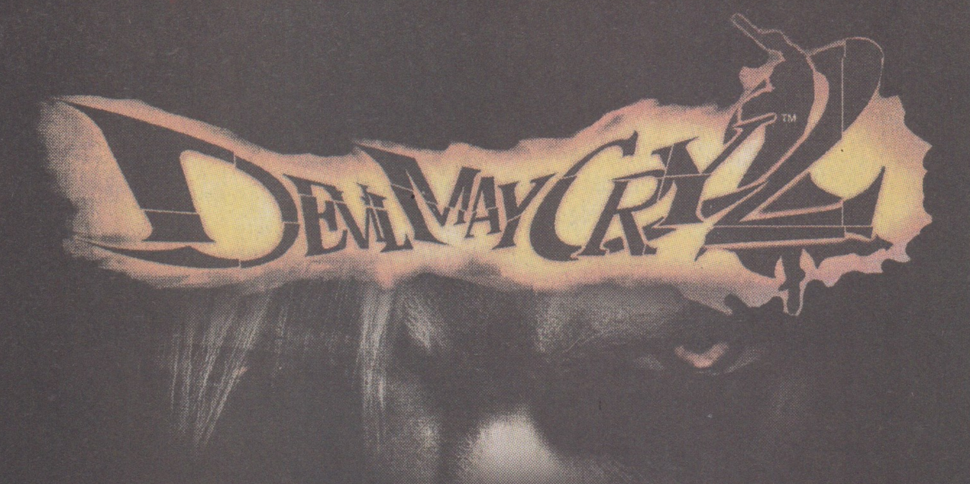
Devil May Cry 2



Devil May Cry left Dante and his new partner Trish as the coolest demon slayers for hire out there. The sequel finds Dante stripped of both his powerful sword, Sparda, and his demon gal. No explanation as to where either is, and the sexy demon replacement, Lucia with her strange clothes and her even stranger accent is more of an annoyance than a femme fatale. Hardly a sequel at all, Devil May Cry 2 is little more than a stripped down parody of the original.

For Devil May Cry 2, Capcom promised the same trash talking attitude and rock star looks with a more highly evolved game play. Supposedly the game tracks your playing and the enemies difficulties grows as your skill does, but what's the point as the game requires no skill. The powerful combo moves of the original are gone, making the entire game in any difficulty mode, including Dante Must Die, just like playing in Easy Mode on DMC. Sure, Dante and Lucia's new jump moves and split shooting are fun, but pointless. For the most part, you can spend the entire game either holding down the default attack or repeatedly shooting the missile launcher. Since being stylish no longer matters, points are now earned for quick kills.

No longer do you need to use certain weapons to defeat certain enemies, just use the sword of your choice, no combos needed. Upgrades to your weapons are mostly a waste of time as nothing new is added with each level. Since being stylish no longer matters, points are now earned for quick kills.

Gone also is the plot. While DMC had a ridiculous but fun storyline, DMC2's story is hard to follow and pointless–something about a harlequin-clown millionaire wanting to raise demons to take over the world or some such. Even sadder is the lack of Dante's comments after each kill. In the first game, Dante was the epitome of cool and his one-liners kept the game entertaining and engaging. Sure the sequel moves faster, but for what, bragging rights having finished the game in a few hours.

That's a few hours for both discs. While Lucia is more fun to play as she seems to jump around more easily and her throwing knives are more clever than Dante's machine guns, her missions are shorter and mostly just backwards versions of Dante's. The few minutes of the underwater world looks promising but ends quickly as does Lucia's entire disc. After completing both characters, the Bloody Castle is unlocked–a survival mode which loses its appeal after fifty or so levels with no end in sight.

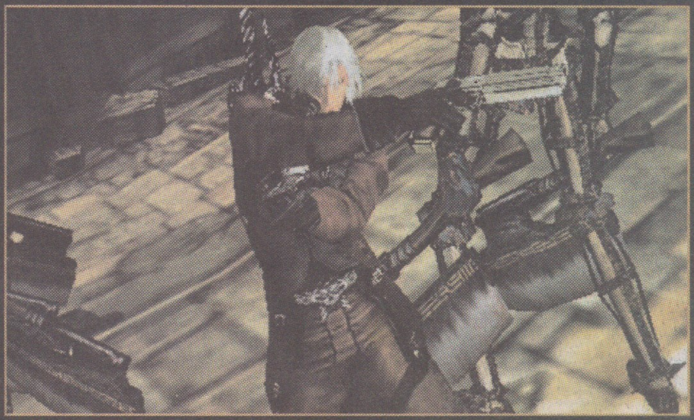
The only obvious evolvement is the slightly improved camera angle. Still there are many times when the bosses are off screen or jumps are hard to gauge. Having the ability to control of the view would solve this annoying problem.

While most of the gothic feel and the detailed noir graphics are missing from DMC2, the music remains almost identical. Heavy guitar rifts and almost industrial techno. By the far the only thing keeping players awake.

After the novelty of jumping off walls wears off, this game can be compared to the side quests found on most other games: a quick jaunt through some not as graphically advanced worlds with a favorite character. While enjoyable, this highly anticipated sequel is still missing the attitude of the first one. Devil May Cry 2 does compete with the best of the non-Capcom action thriller games, just don't expect it to be nearly as fun or as challenging as the original.

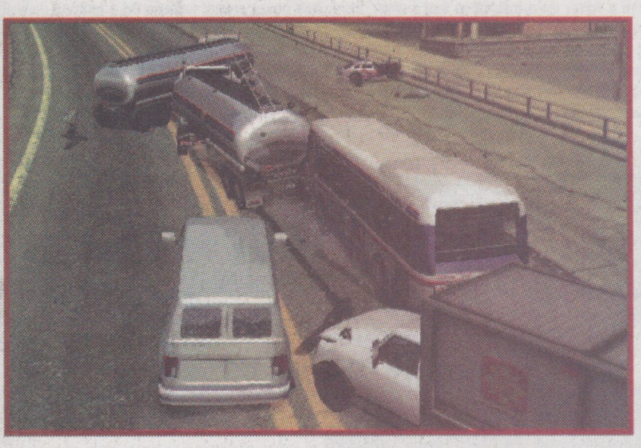
Devil May Cry 2 is little more than a stripped down parody of the original

Platform: Playstation 2
Publisher: Capcom
Players: 1
Pros: Jumping off walls sure is fun
Cons: No skill required
Player: Kristie Macris



Platform: Playstation 2
Developer: Criterion Games
Publisher: Acclaim Entertainment
Players: 1-2
Pros: Driving fast and crashing with impunity
Cons: Music gets boring
Player: smc

In Brief: This Fast and Furious-style racer is faster, crashier and furiouser than the original. Right on! Is there anything better than following through with the aggression incurred by road rage?



Burnout 2 is here hardly one year after it's predecessor, and it almost completely kicks it's older brother's ass. Just keep in mind that I said "almost." Let's start with the vehicles. There's a better rating system for the different vehicles' speed, control and acceleration levels. There are more vehicle types, although most of them must be unlocked by winning the races. A new Pursuit Mode, where you play as a cop trying to stop speeding criminals from getting away, is pretty darn fun. The visual enhancements can be seen in the lighting, the smoke and the textures. The best thing, however, is the post-crash carnage. Hyper-realistic crash replay is all I have to say.

As far as the music goes, the rock intro is decent, but the rest of the music is a banal and repetitive mixing of synth-metal beats. The sound effects can get pretty repetitive too if you focus on them. Engines rev, tires skid and cars make crunching sounds when they slam into something else. Play this by yourself, and be sure to play the Pursuit mode with a friend. It's fun stuff that'll keep you entertained for a good long time. But, there are two things that keep this from totally smoking the first Burnout: where are the multiple angles from the original Crash Replay Theater? And why isn't there a four-player mode? Is it really that hard to imagine how cool it would be to crash into three of your buddies at top speed on a crowded freeway?

Burnout 2 will be released for both Xbox and Gamecube this Spring.

HYPER-REALISTIC CRASH REPLAY...

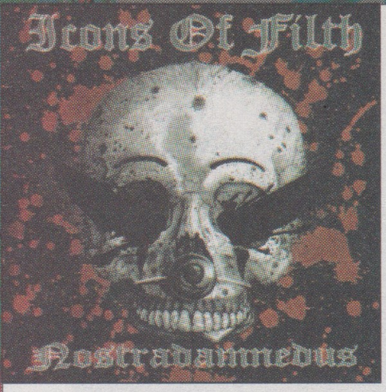
- Is all I have to say.

BURNOUT 2™
POINT OF IMPACT

Brazil
"Dasein"
(Fearless Records)

Right from the very beginning this one hit me like a bullet in the head. "Monolithic" comes on and I thought it was going to be a stupid ass John Tesh sounding New Wave jam. Then when I least expected it the songs becomes a straight up rock song with epic hooks and hauntingly out of tune Conor Oberst like vocals that make more sense than the shape of a pentagram. Upon further investigation I discovered that the lyrical topics delved into topics as far reaching as the destructive use of technology to betrayal. The lyrics are definitely a little disjointed. I can't get enough of those indie bands that use the piano and synth to their advantage. It seems like just about any band could benefit from having a baby grand in their songs somewhere. After I had fully swallowed the music I turned to the press release and realized this band is willing to do anything for their music. According to their write-up these fine young gents have shacked up in an abandoned church, given bodily fluid donations, and been on the brink of eating dog food all for their band. Shit, they've even self-made demos for record labels. With their sound and dedication there's no stopping Brazil.
www.braziltheband.com

Tom



Icons of Filth
"Nostradamnedus"
(Go Kart Records)

Go Kart is certainly up to some good works lately with the release of the new GBH the new Toxic Narcotic and this little album here by Icons of Filth. They play mid-tempo, infectious political punk rock and bear the indelible mark of the punk from their land; they're British Islanders hailing from Wales. Their style is a mix of early GBH, a dash of Crass, touch of Cro-Mags (first album) and a lot of nice pop sensibilities not found in many punk bands of this type. The messages are life-positive and focus on big problems like the oppression of the working class, the brain washing conducted by the media, overpopulation, poor food resource management and the horrible grinding that is daily life under the yolk of the boss, job, tradition, television and family. In other words, it's what punk is supposed to be. Who am I to say what punk is supposed to be? I'm a writer for a magazine that's who! Punk was never meant to become a tedious parade of NOFX and Green Day clones. It wasn't supposed to become nothing but a fashion statement: a Mohawk here, some pink hair-dye there, a piercing in the arse and a tattoo of a middle finger. I'm here telling you this. Sober up, wake up and figure out that your favorite band sucks. Now, get out there and pick this Icons of Filth record or "Compact Disc" as you kids are into now days.
www.iconsoffilth.info

DICK

Bongzilla
"Gateway"
(Relapse Records)

With a name like Bongzilla there is little chance of a misconception. Any idiot can easily see that this is stoner rock even before you pop this little piece of THC into your disc player. Now I don't know if it's just me or if the weed is still clouding my brain but I'm just not sure what to think of this disc. One part of me loves the Sabbath like guitars drenched in feedback, mixed with slow grooves that are the staple of Bongzilla's sound. These guys go into some heavy spaced out jams ala Sabbath and at times remind me of Fu Manchu or even COC. This is what Bongzilla does best and they do it with conviction and precision. The other half of me is annoyed at the fact that the band pummels the same riff into the ground with each song. Take for instance the song '666lb Bongsession' where the band endlessly plays the same riff for almost 8 minutes! Tracks like 'Greenthumb' and 'Keefmaster' have awesome riffs that drive the song but the problem is they don't go anywhere! Sure "Gateway" is a great album for those who are heavily into the stoner rock scene or early Black Sabbath but for the average listener the album isn't recommended for repeated listening. If you're a stoner looking to for music to get high to then by all means smoke this up, otherwise pass on the Bonzilla.
Bongzilla666@hotmail.com

By James Wright

Grave
"Back From the Grave"
(Century Media)

Grave, it's typically a hole in the ground where dead bodies are thrown and then covered in dirt. It's also the name of this death metal band. It's a good basic name for a death metal band; especially the death metal band that took the name of "Grave" because they are a good basic death metal band. The musical focus is on those now well-known gruff cookie monster style vocals and fast, grinding heavy riffs with a mournful solo thrown in at just the right moments. These fine and merry fellows would have fit in quite comfortably back when all that new tasty death metal came burbling up out of the Floridian swamps in the late eighties, but they're not from Florida and it sure as hell isn't the late eighties even if it does feel like it politically. Nope, Grave is Scandinavian and this is a brand spanking new album set to be released in 2003. There's not much more to say except death metal fans both old school and new ought to go get a taste of Grave.

DICK

Pele
"Enemies"
(Polyvinyl Recording Co.)

More insane instrumentation by Polyvinyl darlings Pele. The musical arrangements by this Milwaukee based outfit are jovial, playful pop orchestrations that quite obviously have punk roots, but dabble in their fair share of jazz and noise based rock. The addition of John Minor on the computer has really upped the ante of past efforts. However, the fact that Jon Mueller, Chris Rosenau, Matt Tennessen and company recorded their juggernaut in a girl's locker room makes sure they get the sound desired. I would place them on equal playing fields with Don Caballero and Euphone. I use to have a problem with the fact that this band does not have a singer, but "enemies" makes safe haven that they don't need one. These guys have shared the stage with such names as the Promise Ring, Karate, and The Dismemberment Plan and rightfully so. Another one of those records that makes you feel happy to be alive.
polyvinylrecords.com

Tom

Hot Rod Circuit
"Been There Smoked That"
(Triple Crown Records)

One of my favorite words in the whole English language is stellar and this album, my indie junkies, is fucking stellar. With the long out of print first ep of HRC, "If I Knew Now What I Knew Then," early recordings under the name Antidote (the band's original name) and other rarities it is the obvious choice for any music lover. Hot Rod Circuit has quickly made themselves known as a venerable indie band (that sometimes gets lost in the Vagrant shuffle). Such power pop emo reminds me of the Get Up Kids' "Four Minute Mile," but this album is definitely not a cheap knockoff. Funny story, this one Canadian guy named Thor (uh, after the god of lightning) use to give me a hard time for having a "Four Minute Mile" tee shirt. So one night when he was in a drunken stupor I told this fat fuck I would give him $1,000 if he could run an 8 minute mile. I've never seen so much green vomit projectile come out of one guy or so much land on the guy vomiting. I guess you can throw up off apple martinis and being a pussy ass motherfucker. Sorry little buddy! Never try to run while jalorpified and buy this record.
www.triplecrownrecords.com

Tom

5ive's Continuum Research Project

"The Hemophiliac Dream"

(Tortuga Recordings)

I read a book called Snow Crash a while ago. It's some kind of cyber-punk sort of thing. It was pretty interesting. One of the characters was named Da5id and I never knew how to pronounce his name. I don't know how to pronounce these guys' name either. Luckily, I don't have to pronounce anything, I just have to listen. "The Hemophiliac Dream" is one of the more interesting records I've heard in a while. Consisting of only two instrumental songs, "Part I" and "Part II: The Remix", 5ive's CRP certainly has a penchant for the off-beat. Speaking of off-beat, the two tracks clock in at about twenty-five and thirteen minutes respectively. Both begin with an ominous silence that eventually gives way to a claustrophobia inducing single note that rings for a minute with minimal background noise. Then, complete industrial-goth mayhem. The crunching notes and synthesized chords create an impenetrable wall of tortured noise that would surely appeal to some film student looking for a soundtrack to his (or her) gritty, black and white low budget film. Outside of that slim portion of the population, I don't see a bunch of you out there falling all over each other to pick this thing up.

www.tortugarecordings.com

3rian Greenaway

Amon Amarth

"Versus the World"

(Metal Blade)

There's an overall melancholy feel to the recording which is strange for such double bass driven death metal, but I often find that death metal tends to alter my mood towards melancholy. That's probably why I have never been as completely fond of it as I could be. I love loud, fast and aggressive music but certain types of metal and certain metal bands, Amon Amarth amongst 'em, cause me to wallow in depression and self-pity, and who the hell wants to be taken there by music? Sure, sometimes, it's necessary to despair for your sad, short and insignificant time on this insignificant, pointless and brutal world just to put your existence and the nature of the universe back into its proper perspective, but this form of musically induced meditation is necessary maybe once a year. Other than that once a year, I'd like to avoid the cold, hard slap that is reality as much as possible. That's why I'm a drinker. That's why I'm a drunk. That's why I am part of the Jolly Men of Liquor. It's not a sickness, baby. It's a way of life. And it's hard to take twelve steps in a straight line when you're falling over drunk, and that's the way, uh-huh-uh-huh, I like it. But I don't like Amon Amarth. I just simply do not. Sorry. I wish I could like them, but it's what they do to me. They're a bleak overcast day in an otherwise uninterrupted land of sunshine. They're forlorn desolate winter in a tropical paradise. Do you see? This music is killing me.

DICK

The Blood Brothers

"March on Electric Children"

(Three One G)

Classically different. The Blood Brothers blend so many ingredients into this masterpiece, "March on Electric Children," that you could listen to it endlessly without making sense of how cool it is that they accomplish the fusion so seamlessly. Varying vocals from screams to chants to shrieks, tempo changes, mood shifts, and on-point musicianship coupled with nearly flawless songwriting allow this to be a great record. Song for song, this is one of the best recordings that you can fill your mind with right now to get a truly eclectic impression and vision of what is good music of the time. What The Blood Brothers have put together is something that we should latch onto in order to progress in our personal musical directions. Once you can appreciate what they have done, then you can become enlightened.

Campbell

The Beautiful Mistake

"Light A Match, For I Deserve to Burn"

(The Militia Group)

Someone was so behind this release, and wanted us to check it out in advance so they burned us a CDR. The first one didn't work. They sent another. It sat in a pile way too long as I am a busy guy. Apologies. The album is out. The band has toured. Thousands of girls have creamed in their emoindie panties. Well, maybe not thousands, but I bet a couple got swept up in this, the new blueprint of emoindie rock. I will keep using that word because it fits so many bands utilizing this generally sweeping melodic rock, with that one singer who sings 'hardcore' even though the rest of the band is doing something on a completely different level. Sometimes it works (see: Thursday). The only 'mistake' the Beautiful Mistake makes is trying to give their music that 'edge' through the rough vocalist. It's just not needed. The main vocals have enough range to cover the ground of the fairly inventive indie rock the band is laying down. The songs have lots of little breakdowns and breakouts that give the impression that there is a lot going on, but it seems to keep in line and not wander past the idea of a 'song'. Overall, this is a genre filler. The aforementioned Thursday, Saves the Day, This Day Forward... Any band with 'day' in their name ... will most likely be found in the same library. It's a passionate attempt and perhaps when this band stops sounding so much like the above, and grows more into their own direction, the situation will change. For now, their talent should appeal to the emoindie set that like a little edge in their melodies, even when it's not needed.

Davros

The Blam

"The Blam"

(Unsigned)

Songs by The Blam feature great pop hooks in their phrasing and delivery making for excellent, memorable choruses. The delivery is very good, leaving one humming along the catchy and vivid metaphors: "You got your coke bottles on ... You got your nurse's coat on." Songs by The Blam are so good as songs themselves; the group's material could succeed a cappella. The Blam seems to be aware of this and does not bury their quality material in ostentatious arrangements, instead relying on a focused two-guitar pop rock approach that recalls '80s rock. The mix is excellent on the album so that the music never threatens to bury the vocals. http://www.theblam.com

Tom "Tearaway" Schulte

Zeromancer

"Eurotrash"

(Cleopatra Records)

Orgy, I mean Zeromancer, hit with the modern look and sound. Orgy, I mean Zeromancer, utilize that pumping electro angst with big distortion choruses. The formula is very predictable. Verses that whisper all intensely over a driving drum beat with some keyboard noises to fill it out, then crash in together for the chorus. This all has been done before with the various NIN knockoffs that came through in the mid/late 90's. Now, it's not bad at all, just achingly unoriginal. The 1-800-Suicide tune has a wry sense of humor to the "phone call" message that basically lets you choose your demise by touchtone (To self-terminate by electric shock, press 1. For termination by overdose, press 2.) That's pretty good. But musically, if you just can't get enough Godhead (who does this same thing but much much better), Orgy, I mean Zeromancer isn't a total waste of time. The production is tight so it bleeps and blips accordingly. And if you like one song, you'll like the whole disk as it's the same number repeated, just different lyrics. At least Orgy, I mean Zeromancer are consistent. Perhaps that's a bad thing as track after track had me hoping for some degree of risk taking, only to be given a very static attempt at new-wave electro rock. Yawn. Although it is worth noting, I had to listen to this over and over to make sure I was giving this a fair shake. So there must be something in here that hints at something bigger and better. They do have the 'look' down and that's so important when creating 'music' now isn't it?

Trent, look what the kids have done with your music.

Bushman

AM/FM

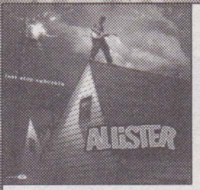
"The Sky Is The New Ground"

(Polyvinyl Record Co.)

A short four song ep from the multi-talented and multi-dimensional duo AM/FM. The band which is comprised of Brian Sokel and Michael Parsell is probably best known for their first LP "Mutilate Us" which pulled its sounds from a number of different genres and carried with it a large range of comparisons. For the most part this ep follows in suit with the duo's pop-rock arrangements, but the use of symphony like string arrangements has created an opaque wall of sound that really makes this band stand out. The most notable track is certainly "All To Remember" which is an all encompassing "live while you still can" sort of ballad with a sweet harmonica part, a full symphony orchestra, wonderful drum machine, and electronic (not electric) guitars. Hopefully, this is just a taste tester for what will be a substantial release in the near future.

www.polyvinylrecords.com

Tom



Allister

"Last Stop Suburbia"

(Drive Thru Records)

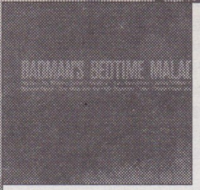
Guitars played at high passionless velocities, boring relationship bellyaching, and stale production manifest themselves in Allister's Last Stop Suburbia, a record where the titles change, but the songs stay the same. These are less songs than derivative regurgitations of contemporary quotidian garbage that was not all that good in the first place. Just think second string poppy punk groups like the Starting Line or Midtown. Despite the cloying nature of the record, there are a few tracks that might appease more than your 14 year old sister. Like "Overrated," where they mix up the standard tempo, let the melody take hold, and slap on a catchy sing-song hook to create a cut with a little shine to it. "Somewhere on Fullerton," also stands out, as the vocals seem less bored and the ascending drumbeats add substance to the track. The rest of "Last Stop Suburbia" is the typical heard-it-once-heard-it-a-million-times type of fluff that has come to be typical of Drive-Thru releases. For a band that originated as a school talent show act, they could have at least included a cover of "Living on a Prayer."

Scott Burroughs

Behemoth
"Here and Beyond"
(Century Media)

The cover of Behemoth's new album is graced by a large four-armed goat man. As goat men go he probably has more tattoos than most. Some people are intimidated by his big goat horns but there really is no reason to be. He's a nice goatman from Goatsmouth County. That's where he lives with his family, consisting of one little goat headed boy and four goat headed little girls. He loves them dearly. It's been a struggle though, raising those kids all by himself. He misses his beautiful goat headed wife something fierce. Every day the pain of her loss is like a dagger in his heart. She passed on during childbirth. It's a sad fact that among goat headed women the percentage who die while giving birth is extremely high. The goat headed women typically do not have the pelvic girth necessary for giving birth to such large horned goat headed children. Even though the children's horns are but little nubs at birth, their mothers still have human vaginas and little needs to be said concerning human vaginas and goat sized heads. But the Goatman lives on. He mourns frequently, but his wife's former radiance and glowing life-force is now in his rambunctious kids. He joined a support group consisting of a dozen or so other goatmen who have also lost their wives and/or girlfriends during the birth of their children. In fact, the Goatman has really become the spiritual leader of the group and they've taken to calling him Behemoth being fittingly symbolic of his strength. He can eat a whole tin can in under a minute!

DICK

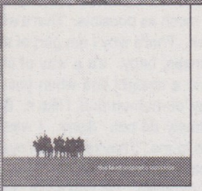


Badman's Bedtime Maladies
"Compilation"
(Badman Recording Co.)

I like to really get inside what I do and really understand its true meaning. I once drank two 40s before a final because I was doing market research for an essay I had to write about Miller Brewing Company and in that case it didn't really help me with the final. To make a long story short, like the name would indicate I listened to this album five days straight right before I went to bed. Ironically, I also had the flu for the last three days. There are some really good mellow minimalist indie acts on this compilation. The first three tracks from James William Hindle, Ill Lit, and My Morning Jacket are probably the most notable tracks and I'm not sure if this is because I dosed off for the rest or what. My morning Jacket especially gets my blood flowing because of the synth, very live sounding drums and often trodding vocals. Another excellent rack is the live version of "bass song" by Hayden who sounds pretty killer live. This comp. is definitely for the sad sappy sucker in us all, but has some very good new acts you should really check out. The other bands featured on this record are Ken Stingfellow, Lanterna, Eric Shea and the High Deserters, Misc, Rebecca Gates, and aula Frazier and Mark Eitzel.

www.badmanrecordingco.com

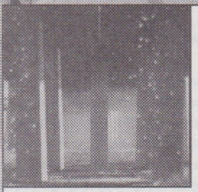
Tom



The Feud
"Language is Technology"
(Insidious Plot Audio)

Funny how there is no language in this album. Real funny. See how much this amuses you, giggling away like a school girl. Another band named Orthrelm has no vocals, but they sound totally different. The Feud doesnt really blow you away with crazy musical styles and directions; it's basically that good 'ol instrumental math rocky jazz stuff that bands who open for Sonic Youth wish they could sound like (with their singer, of course). Definatly work checking out if you like your music without vocals which, after all, are just an extra instrument. www.insidiousplot.com

PR!



The Forms
"Icarus"
(Threespheres)

The music on "Icarus" is about as unreserved and beautiful as the scenic pictures in the album sleeve and the enhanced portion of the disc. Arrangements on this handsome 18+ minute disc are reminiscent of caP' n Jazz because of the playful but screaming vocals mixed with minimalistic crunching guitars and powerful drums. Production wise you couldn't ask for anything more than Steve Albini and John Golden. Music of this temperament has a complex nature that my mind just sort of gets lost in. Why couldn't this album be longer? These kids are wearing some pretty big shoes, let's just hope they can fill them.

threespheres.com

Tom

The Boggs
"We Are The Boggs We Are"
(Arena Rock Recording Co.)

I just don't think the world and I are ready for bluegrass music. This shit is just flat out weird. "we are the boggs we are" is twenty songs of a guy playing one of those little guitars (ukulele?) which was produced on what must have been prehistoric equipment because the sound quality is often lacking. Actually, this whole album is in mono which is a throwback in itself. This band could play at one of those country town hoedowns where the person who bakes the best pie gets heralded as the town queen. No wait, remember in Titanic (the movie) when they go to the lower decks of the ship and that weird pauper music was playing, this band sounds like that. I wish I could tell you more, but this is a tough one.

www.arenarockrecordingco.com

Tom

Northstar
"Is This Thing Loaded?"
(Triple Crown Records)

Pop Punk bands don't come from Alabama everyday. Actually, the only band I've ever knowingly heard from Alabama was called Alabama. Northstar must have practiced their instruments in between helping ma and pa till the fields and taking trips to the outhouse. I guess they have had a number of line-up changes including two different lead singers leading up to their first full-length "is this thing loaded?". I just wonder why so many people have left the band and how they can call themselves the same thing after so many line-up changes but whatever. Northstar sounds pretty much like every band they have toured with including Taking Back Sunday and Further Seems Forever. What can I say other than that Northstar is poppy as hell with crunching guitars and emotional lyrics about life. I think this band has a lot of growing up to do before they could be considered a truly inspirational band with some influence on the masses. If you score bands on originality look somewhere else, but if you score bands on sound and sincerity go out and buy this album.

www.triplecrownrecords.com

Tom

Race for Titles
"Self-Titled"
(Redemption Recording)

Race for Titles has a classic, post-punk pop sound that is still mature and sophisticated recalling The Church and song-oriented English indie pop. The album offers a lot in texture for the listener, varying from ethereal guitar to an impressive wall-of-sound approach. An important debut, watch for more from this Omaha, Nebraska band.

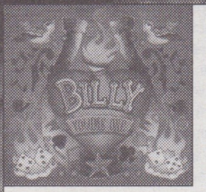
www.racefortitles.com

Tom "Tearaway" Schulte

InTheVisualz
"Menatal Criminals Ep"
(InTheVisualz Records)

INTHEVISUALZ manifested from the minds of individuals wishing to deliver the gift of gab to a world still wiping the sleep from their eyes. INTHEVISUALZ sound will reverberate in your cranium for days as you fumble over the words to describe the sound you've heard. They'll wreck your psyche up as they spit eloquent lines over Z.G.S. beats. With political positions and social constrictions these Cali heads choose to marinate in the underground, utilizing it as an outlet for positive change and expression. INTHEVISUALZ delivers in an array of homegrown smoked out, brain stimulating style lyrics and beats. Also expect an Lp to drop on Halloween dubbed "Smoke Signals". And to further your underground education you can get Azmah and Switch Griffens debut release "The Drifters" expected to drop on the day of the dead as well. (Modern Fix July Issue InTheVisualz feature)

Farr



Various
"Billy Volume One"
(Hepcat Records)

Now I know why this is called "Billy" - as in "Hillbilly!" At first my young adult adrenaline filled pores screamed for me to shut this shit off, but I stopped short to enjoy. It felt like the Annual Hootenany festival was being held in my bedroom, as acts like the Reverend Horton Heat and Nekromantix invaded punk rock space. YEEEHAWW! I grew up exposed to old country music (yeah, like before Faith Hill and the Dixie Chicks), Buddy Holly, Elvis, and a lot of Motown (why did I turn out the way I did?). This compilation of oldies turned newies is such a trip into the past. Martini Brom and her track "Eat My Words" sounds exactly like an old Patsy Cline tune. Nekromantix brings in a little harder Psychobilly sound with "Alice in Psycholand." It's a tad bit odd that Demented Are Go, sound so wholesome, yet their album is titled "Orgasmic Nightmare." I guess it's the female vocals that get me the most - today there's so much emphasis on stupid, catchy, squelching chorus's, and the ladies on this album just go full bore raw vocals with a country twang. I guess the only sad thing about this album is that Tiger Army doesn't have a track on here - then again I think they might be too hardcore for this sorta mellow album.

Skye

Brand New Sin

"Self-Titled"

(Now or Never Records)

It's weird to get a Rock record. It seems like nowadays if you've got a guitar in your band you've got about three options: punk, metal, or country. I've got to tip my hat (or beanie, as the case may be) to anyone with enough balls to make a record that obviously nobody is going to like. Me included. Brand New Sin plays a decidedly old sounding form a southern rock, tinged with bluesy bits of riffage. With their helter-skelter sound and gritty taste, Brand New Sin manage to mangle twelve tracks worth of on this new release, none of which I was able to make it all the way through to the end. While I could insult you all by throwing in a Skynyrd comparison or even a G 'n R circa "Appetite for Destruction" reference, but I won't. Brand New Sin does little to convince me that Rock has recovered from Nirvana's death stroke. Never mind (get the little joke there?) the overwritten choruses and the clumsy guitar work here; I'll mind them for you. And no need to thank me for keeping you away from such a decidedly unappealing record; it's my job. www.brandnewsin.com

Brian Greenaway

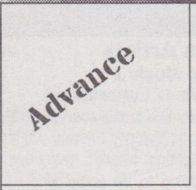
KMFDM

"Strum and Drang Tour 2002"

(Metropolis)

With a back catalog as extensive as KMFDM it only makes sense to release a live album. The live album serves as a greatest hits of sorts and also either signals the return or demise of a group. In this case I'm not quite sure which of the two it is just yet. For me the release of a KMFDM live album is a great idea. I do like quite a bit of their material but would probably never get around to actually purchasing one of their albums. In this case I get the best of both worlds. Songs like 'D.I.Y', 'Megalomaniac' and their infectious cover of Nancy Sinatra's 'Boots' makes this a must have for not only die hard KMFDM fans but for anyone who doesn't already own a KMFDM albumbut would like to.
www.kmfdm.net

James Wright



Yer Mom

"Rock Punk Swing"

(CleanBox Entertainment)

I don't know where to begin. Do I start with the lyrics from "Mormon Fury"? "So glad to live the religious life / With fifteen kids and seven wives" or do I start with "Monica"'s "Much like a walrus on the beach I'm basking in my fame / I auctioned off a dress it was just a little stained"? Maybe instead of sophomoric (yet oh so funny) lyrics I should focus on the musical style that is Yer Mom. Musically, these guys are light-years away from sophomoric-they're still in kindergarten. This is actually the third pressing of this album, which was initially recorded on student loan money, and when the guys had the chance to go back and re-master the basement-quality instrumentals, they decided to just put it out anyway as a testament to what can be done without worrying about the details. Drawing their inspiration from acts like The Vandals and Guttermouth, Yer Mom serve up track after track of tongue in cheek antics, attacking everything from Trailer Park America to the bling-bling rap culture to hippies on speed as "Rock Punk Swing" steps on more toes than a 250 pound girl at the prom. But just like that girl, it's a hell of a ride. Just kidding, that's disgusting. Pretend I didn't write that. Just listen to the record.
www.cleanbox.com

Brian Greenaway

Little Wings

"Light Green Leaves"

(K Records/ Secretly Canadian)

If I was from Canada I'd keep it a secret, too. I should also keep it a secret that I really like Little Wings because my hardcore friends would probably beat the living hell out of me. Little Wings make some of the softest folk rock of all time. Softies but goodies. Many of the stripped down tracks are nothing more than gentle guitars and casual melodies with the odd drum and or keyboard thrown in for good measure. If there's a missing link between Simon and Garfunkle, The Breeders, and Built to Spill, then this is surely it. The lyrics are esoteric and obtuse, the melodies are haunting and beautiful, incorporating elements of jazz, barbershop quartets, and folk music into something that should definitely be in your CD collection. While the musicianship is undoubtedly unique and worthy of note, it is the subtle poetry of the lyrics that keeps "Light Green Leaves" spinning in my player. "What Wonder" contains the pointed, "Don't fight the day / Don't blame the way / Don't kill your laughing" as well as the murky, "Another branch to break / Another crooked limb to climb". A lot of people are sure to dismiss this as a bunch of hippies mumbling their way though a dozen tracks, but they're missing out. And so are you.
www.krecs.com/littlewings

Brian Greenaway

Dirty Three

"She Has No Strings Apollo"

(Touch and Go Records)

Don't let the name of this band mislead you; "Dirty Three" is in no way a greasy rock and roll band. No, the "Dirty Three" is something else. Something entirely different. "Dirty Three" is a quasi folk/classical string ensemble with drums and a dash of rock influence. "She Has No Strings Apollo" is the group's sixth studio album and was recorded in the lovely city of Melbourne, Australia. Perhaps the origin of the recording reflects on the groups sound? Maybe. Beginning with the personnel we have Warren Ellis (violin, piano), Mick Turner (guitar, bass, organ) and Jim white (drums). Just looking at the line up tells one they are in for something completely different. Staring at the cover will be a byproduct of owning this CD since the artwork is magnificent and matches the music perfectly. When you insert the small disc into the drive you get an instant reaction which never leaves you: You are witnessing something special. Track one, "Alice Wading", sets the tone for the whole album with its moving string lines and guitar spatter. The elements "Dirty Three" uses will immerse you into a tank of liquefied neo-classic adventurism. Moving through the album is easy and smooth with each song taking on a personality of its own. All the tracks are purely instrumental, no vocals, but this does not take away from the soundscape they create. "Long Way to go with no Punch" begins with a nice little piano line interwoven with violin melodies and sparse guitar strums. Truly, "Dirty Three" has been born of great genius. The "Dirty Three" website is located at www.dirtythree.com but is lacking in many areas. First, there is no bio and the news section displays no news. As far as sound clips, I could not find any though there are plenty of pictures. I'm sure CDnow.com will have some sound clips so stop by there and dazzle your pallet. With great emotion, "Dirty Three" has proven the use of strings, sometimes distorted guitar and drums will work with the right people and writing. Drown yourself in the haze of the creative works of "She Has no Strings Apollo".

Creedle 110

Count The Stars

"Never To Be Taken Alive"

(Victory Records)

With a name like Count The Stars, the album was expected to be something more fluffy, colorful, and, for lack of a better word, soft. Instead, Count The Stars' "Never To Be Taken Alive" is flowing with poppy-punk, catchy riffed, tracks that are sure to be crowd pleasers. "On The Way Home" begs for audience participation in the "whoa, whoa" chorus segment, as "Better Off Alone," invites one to scream the lyrics at the loudest possible decimal. Although they might seem formula - four not-so-bad lookin' guys in a poppy-punk act singing catchy songs - yeah like that's never been done before - Count the Stars have a unique feel. Not every song has the ability to be interpreted as being about some horrid break up with some stuck-up female, instead there is substance and a sound that brings a sweet smile to my lips. The vocals are delivered quick and smooth, as the singer hardly cracks into a full scream until the track "Saving Myself," where he belts out the chorus as if he's really wanting to say "in your face." If you're into the upbeat, sing-along type of albums, where the lyrics can be understood, and learned quickly for lip syncing car karaoke, then this is a for sure hit.

Skye

The Boils

"The Ripping Waters e.p."

(Thorp Records)

Karl Marx would have liked The Boils. Their anthems of rising up against the bourgeoisie will have every kid in plaid pants and spiked bracelets singing along. This batch of OI! from the streets of Philly is the soundtrack for kids digging ditches, shoveling gravel and sitting in toll booths. It won't have the same effect as The Communist Manifesto, but it makes you feel like you should be out fighting the good fight against anyone trying to keep the working class down. The Boils, however, could benefit from a little more lyrical explanation. The fact that they want to fight the upper class is obvious, but a little more story in the songs would really drive their purpose home. So stand up with The Boils Manifesto. People with torn jeans, raw knuckles, empty wallets and crushed spirits unite with these three men. Sing their songs under your breath while you wait for the moment to strike. I can't wait for the day when The Boils proclaim their call to arms, paint their faces with mud, wear kilts and yell from atop their valiant touring van "OI! Unite!"
www.theboils.com

Pete Soyer

Covenant

"Northern Light"

(Metropolis Records)

I by no means am prepared to give a educated opinion of techno music. With that said Covenant so called test the water of my knowledge with this release "Northern Light". I've listened and listened and well you know the rest and I just keep picturing that thing on Saturday Night Live with Will Ferrell and Chris Catan in Club A. That's right everyone's favorite party spot in Tijuana. Not only that, but the strobe light is in full effect and while Chris and Will bang their heads back and fourth there's half a dozen male dancers with big muscles and glow sticks going crazy all around them. It's sort of odd. Try whispering that in the dark.
www.covenant.dk

Tom

Daylightdies

"No Reply"
(Relapse Records)

What we got here is some old-fashioned plod-along power metal with death vocals by the sound of things right up front and center. What's starting to get me about the metal scene in general is the amount morose mother-fuckers who make up the members of the bands. There's so much joylessness in their ranks that I wonder how they all manage to live out each oppressive day of their life without jumping off a goddamn bridge into shit fucking creek. Even the album art of these bands is sad and sorrowful. Daylightdies, with their unhappy bunched up name, has album art that's simply a darkly lit purple curtain blowing in the breeze. It's like a death shawl in waiting. All the lyrics are morbidly depressive bits of enjambed poetic train wrecks. It's too much for me to take. These guys need happy pills. Maybe some Saint John's Wort for starters and if that doesn't do the trick then lets dive head long into the pharmaceutical antidepressants. We'll get these guys writing songs like "Zippity Do-Da" in no time. Fucking depressed mother-fuckers need to do some cheerin' up before they blow their damn fool heads off. That's what I fucking say. Fucking shit, man. Eat some ice cream, whistle, bask in the sun, romp in a glade with a litter of puppies, pick some flowers, have a dry vodka martini with some friends and drink to life, the future and the sun rising.

DICK

Falling Cycle

"The Conflict"
(Facedown Records)

Heavy metal and hardcore, you've heard it a thousand times before but it is becoming very popular and a lot of people apparently dig it. Falling Cycle does a good job of covering the metal side with some speedy fretwork, but the vocals lean more to the hardcore side of things, along with the ever-popular breakdowns. This band reminds me of Fasedown, another band similar in genre who pulls off this style extremely well. When Falling Cycle throws in a harmonized guitar lick that flows effortlessly into a real breakdown, then you can tell that they are at home in this speed-infested record. Melody is a reoccurring theme in "The Conflict" and oh how refreshing it is. A metal band not afraid of acoustic guitars and pianos…neat, yes, but innovative? You can be the judge of that.
www.fallingcycle.net
www.facedownrecords.com

Campbell

Ancient Greeks

"The Song Is You"
(Flameshovel Records)

Who would ever want a flaming shovel? Coming at you as if in a fist of rage this off the wall Sea and Cake "Nassau" type record is as filled with jazz chords of a seminal quality. I immediately wanted to pick up a guitar and figure out what in the hell these boys were doing. Sometimes just when you've had enough of the guitar roughage they switch it up like on "The Joke". It would be hard to pull of songs like "The Wolverine, Who Has No Friends" and "Transcontinental" without such a laid back, off time signature approach to playing drums, but these chaps pull it off without a hitch. I've been hooked, line and sinker, but don't expect me to come up for air, I want more!
www.flameshovel.com

Tom

The Arrivals

"Exsenator Orange"
(Thick Records)

Whenever I hear a punk record I have to admit that I prepare myself mentally for some redundant replicated sounding shit. It's always "Fuck this!" and "Fuck that!" How many times can you hear the same shit before you're sick of it all. Then there's the punk bands that just have something different, it's still punk but it grabs you a little more. Theres some cool hooks, and some drumming that steers clear of the all to typical bass drum, snare punk beats. I just have a feeling that if I got rip roaring shit faced at some dive joint that The Arrivals would get shit goin'. They've got energy, enthusiam, and most importantly some soul. So to sum it up, these guys aren't your run of the mill punk band. If you see em' on a flyer and you got an extra ten bucks, take your lazy ass off the couch and check em' out.
www.thickrecords.com

Thom Cooper

Alexander Cockburn

"Beating the Devil: The Incendiary Rants of Alexander Cockburn"
(Alternative Tentacles Records)

Alexander Cockburn discusses a number of relevant topics facing the general public throughout these "rants" which are a collection of speeches recorded at the old and new AK Press Warehouses as well as from Mission High School located in San Francisco. Cockburn addresses interesting issues such as the dealings with the World Trade Organization in Seattle, the "stolen election," and the future of faith-based organizations. This is done by adding a touch of humor, but more importantly by keeping a focus on presenting topics and crises that are arising in our society that require our attention. He is able to offer alternative views to issues without sounding or coming off like an elitist. He mentions opinions that expose some less-evident realities existent by way of illustrations like military spending and its ineffectiveness in our modern day economy. This release is interesting to listen to and it has the potential to broaden our current views on subjects that prove to be rather important.

Chris W

End on End

"Why Evolve When We Can Go Sideways?"
(Substandard Records)

There are so many labels floating around these days, it's hard to know which to use to describe this band. Is this emo-core, hard-core, post hardcore or, my new favorite, emo-screamo? This rocks: there's a good description. Vocalist Andy Kindon is a talented screamer who sings about political issues. In the CD booklet, before the lyrics of each song there is an added thought such as "We are all products" and "If you haven't, go to the nearest library and start reading, then get yourself a drum and beat it until the walls start to crumble." The guitars are metal-influenced and the driving force of the music is offset by a few bits of cello and piano thrown into the mix.
www.endonend.com

Angela Brandt

CKY

"Infiltrate, Destroy, Rebuild"
(Island)

I'm sick and tired of seeing the latest nu-metal band or "emotionally melodic" band cross my desk. Finally something new an original! CKY are most notable as that band on MTV's Jackass but for someone like me, who was unaware of Jackass until the movie, these guys are a breath of fresh air. With spaced out jams, great melodies and killer grooves these guys are incredible. There is an infectious element to CKY's music that will keep you coming back for more like an addicted crack whore. The thing I liked most about this record was the fact that every time you listen to it you hear a little bit more ear candy that you hadn't heard before. 'Flesh Into Gear'shows the band at their best with this melodic spaced out jam, 'Close Yet So Far' shows CKY as a diverse creation with their great acoustics, 'Inhuman Creation Station' has a this amazing groove that will force you to sing along and bob your head. Each song is diverse and distinct in it's own right without compromising the overall package. "Destroy, Infiltrate, Rebuild" brings music back to the days when it was about creating a great ALBUM and not creating one or two hit singles. One the best releases of 2002.
www.ckymusic.com or www.ckyalliance.com

James Wright

Various Artists

"Fighting Music 2"
(Death Wish / Lumberjack)

Doesn't thirty-five artists sound a little big for a compilation? I mean, if this truly is "fighting music", thirty-five tracks is going to be some kind of royal rumble, nahsayin? "Fighting Music" is a great title, seeing as how there's enough aggression here to make The Gaza Strip look like Candyland. Anyway, Throwdown's on here, so that's always good. No Warning's "Short Fuse" also is great-hardcore with a thrashy little edge. Count Me Out is a great band that you're not listening to. My Luck is a super name for a band and they rock, too. Generally I'm pretty apprehensive of compilations after an old girlfriend in high school made me a tape she spent "hours" on, which turned out to be a Fat Wreck comp. "Fighting Music 2", though, provides so many bangs for the buck that it would be tough to go wrong. Even the savviest hardcore head out there is going to be hard pressed to know even half the bands on this release, ensuring at least a few hidden gems. Quite a few of the tracks on here are either from re-issues, splits, or 7", all formats that often slip though the tracks in all of our musical collections. Or, at least mine. Maybe you already know everything about everything and own all too, but if that's the case, why are you reading this magazine? Jerk.
www.lumberjack-online.com

Brian Greenaway

Dropscience

"dies tonight"
(Happy Couples Never Last Records)

Sort of a dismal name for a label, don't you think? San Diego is where it's at man. The girls are off the hook and the music isn't far behind. Look, I've seen these guys before and this record just does not do them justice. Just one live performance will make even the most skeptical of listeners an instant fan of their operation. I think it is the rock attitude with the guitar minimalism and the screaming vocals that really do it for me. Dropscience can build up a breakdown so well that it makes me want to hurl. One thing I do like about this album is their attention to detail on the fade-out of tracks and sweet interludes that make the tracks interchange very nicely. This is a band that you need to listen to at full volume through headphones to really hear the whole song. God damn, I can't get over the energy and the breakdowns because you know they're going to happen and the anticipation is a fucking bitch. As far as I'm concerned this is the best band in San Diego right now. Get into the upbringing.
www.hcnl.com

Tom

Edgewise
"Complete Discography"
(Thorp Records)

My cousin is in Germany and he's got some new girlfriend he brought home for Christmas. She speaks four languages. That's three more than I speak. And four more than the lead singer for Edgewise, who obviously hasn't quite mastered one yet. I'm not saying I had a tough time making out any of the lyrics on this all encompassing discography released by our friends at Thorp, well, I guess I am. I'm down for hardcore. When used appropriately it can be like the wake-up call Bam Margera gives his dad in "Jackass". Those who focus solely on the aggression and the and sheer noise inherent in hardcore fail to see the forest for the trees, so to speak. It isn't the overwhelming ugliness of things that is the reason for the despondency and anger, it's the fact that things could be better. Without ever recognizing the beauty buried beneath the surface of our world, hardcore is just whining, which is sadly what Edgewise does throughout their "Complete Discography". Heavy tracks like "Piss and Vinegar" and "Silent Rage" hint at this idea but for the most part, all twenty-eight tracks come across as a big, ugly blowout.
www.thorprecords.com

Brian Greenaway

Mark Kozelek
"What's Next To The Moon"
(Badman Recording Co.)

Mark Kozelek is a very, very brave man. It takes a lot of guts to cut an album with just you and a guitar. One has to be an accomplished guitarist, an incredible singer and also have a gimmick. Mark Kozelek fills each of these requirements. This album, "What's Next To The Moon", is a collection of AC/DC songs played with acoustic guitar and sung by Mark himself. I couldn't believe it when I heard it, but the songs are definitely AC/DC songs. He creates such beautiful recordings of these songs that this album relaxes you! He uses a soft, folk/quasi-country style that works very well. I know what you're thinking: Country? You've got to be kidding! Well, his style is blended enough that if you hate country (like myself) you will still like this album. "Up to my neck in you" is a killer track and makes you reminisce on good times. I would have never thought that an AC/DC song could do that. The title song, "What's Next To The Moon", is really as mean as he gets, but it will keep you interested. "If you want blood" is my personal favorite because of the way he plays this song. Take a hard song and try to make it a happy tune; only Mark can do it. All in all, this album is a feel-good album that is low key and can relax you after a stressful day. While you're listening to it, you can even laugh at the fact that you are listening to AC/DC. Mark is very good at his craft and deserves many kudos for his work on "What's Next To The Moon". Visit www.badmanrecordingco.com for ordering info and check out what else they have to offer.

Creedle 110

Check Engine
"Self-Titled"
(Southern Records)

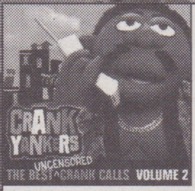
Is jazzcore a genre? How about jazzpunk-fusion? In the mold of Sweep the Leg Johnny (in fact, Check Engine boasts two members of the notoriously impossible to listen to act), Check Engine brings a saxophone to the punk party on this Southern Records release. While so much of Sweep the Leg Johnny was based on math rock, giving it its uber-annoying style, Check Engine takes those odd time signatures and tempo changes and softens, caresses and molds them into a nebulous sonic entity that actually sounds like something you'd want to listen to. There's a lot of Fugazi's "Repeater" on here, as well as a little Drive Like Jehu, so when you combine that with the saxophone and the shouted vocals, you've got yourself one hell of an interesting rock band. If you like your vanilla punk, then Check Engine's exotic trappings probably won't make you want to order another helping, but for those of you wanting a little something different, Check Engine just might be the answer.
www.southern.com

Brian Greenaway

The Early November
"For All Of This"
(Drive-thru)

This band has been getting a lot of hype for being one of the best new indie rock bands to hit the scene in the past year. My brother had an opportunity to see them at the Warped Tour this last summer and said they were really good live too. As a first attempt ep I've got to agree with my bro. I just wish there weren't so many bands that sound like this right now because it would make them much more memorable. If only the world weren't opening their eyes to music that actually sounds good (no offense to Creed, Kid Rock, or Uncle Kracker, actually, fuck em', suck my dick you shitty bands out there). The most significant part about this band is singer Ace Enders' voice which is a pristine rendition of raw emotion. I really like the tracks "Take Time And Find" and "We Write The Wrong" because those two really showcase the raw ability of this band. Shit, I've already burned this record for five people and I've had the disc for a week (sue me record clowns!). It's weird but people hear The Early November and instantly like them. I know all the drive-thru bands sound about the same, but The Early November one is far better than the lot of them.
www.theearlynovember.com

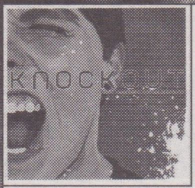
Tom



Crank Yankers
"The Best Uncensored Crank Calls: Volume 2"
(Comedy Central Records)

Crank Yankers, the Comedy Central Television Show, has released this version on compact disc, and it is definitely almost as funny as the show - the only separating factor would be the visual aspect that separates the television show from other comedies on air. Guest appearances are contributed by such personalities as Saturday Night Live's Tracy Morgan, David Alan Grier, and Jimmy Kimmel who is also an executive producer of Crank Yankers along with his co-star on The Man Show, Adam Carolla. These comedians go through with several hilarious situations. One standout track that exemplifies what every pre-teen prank caller wishes for is "The Phone Zone." In this sketch, character Sav Macauley gets a hold of someone at his home and convinces him to play along with his fictitious phone-game show called "The Phone Zone." Soon enough the caller gets the victim to try to answer ridiculous questions. "You have three seconds to count to ten!" "The last time you went and did number two in your bathroom did you thoroughly wipe your ass?" No, he did not.
www.comedycentral.com

Campbell



Knockout
"Searching for Solid Ground"
(Fearless Records)

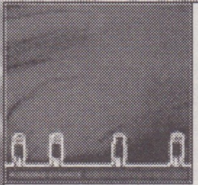
Is there some store I'm not aware of where they sell musicians? I feel like there must have been some big sale at one of these secret stores somewhere in Southern California on generic punk singers. The voice isn't as immediate as Mike Ness' and isn't as agile as Joey Cape's, but hey, it was on sale. Knockout is another one of those bands' whose credit card was surely near its limit when they stepped into the Singer Aisle at CrapMusicWorld. They bought their dude (half-off!) and now the CD is in your stereo and you're feeling like you've heard it before, but no, that was Good Charlotte, no wait, it was New Found Glory, no wait, it was...You see what I mean? When Johnny Half-Price croons, "All of this time I've been so lost and you stayed with me / Please take me back because I want to make you happy" you almost believe him, but you don't want to. You don't want to believe that subtlety is such a lost art. You don't want to believe that anyone would bother to write such painfully obvious sentiments. You don't want to believe that the requisite pop-punk accompaniment is as formulaic as it sounds. You don't want to weep for the future. You don't want to. Then "Artificial Pheromones" begins with the couplet, "When we get back from this place / I'll put a smile on your face" and you break down into tears. www.knockoutrock.com

Brian Greenaway

Channel 3
"CH3"
(Doctor Strange Records)

According to the sticker on the cover of the CD, this is the best Channel 3 album since 1982's "Fear of Life" 1982!? Fuck!. That means these guys have to be at the very least in their mid 30's. They are still tearing shit up. This thrashy punk-to-the-max album will be a ruling edition to any skate/bar punks record collection. I swear every day I hope I will continue to play, and listen to music, and stay as pumped on rock as I am now until the day I'm six feet down. This is a good punk record, and a big FUCK YOU! to anyone who thinks that getting older means forgeting what you love. Either that or as I get older I'm trying to convince myself and everyone else that I can endure the trials of time and still be cool. Hope it works! Channel 3 is punking hard.
www.chthree.com

Thom C.



Kissing Chaos
"Enter With A Bullet"
(Fueled By Ramen)

It's been a longtime coming for me to receive this ep. I am or was a huge fan of Pop Unknown and when a music insider told me they had split up in the middle of last year and that Kissing Chaos had spawned from them I was instantly pumped to hear their shit. The only trepidation I had with Kissing Chaos was that the singer from Pop Unknown was not involved (I think he started a family). If you are expecting this band to sound like something you might have heard one or even two generations of bands ago you are going to be very disappointed, but mark my words that Kissing Chaos is a fucking spectacular band. These guys are two parts hardcore, one part punk, one and one-half parts math rock and two parts screamo which has created a very interesting flavor of indie. The band has already shared the stage with such names as Recover, Piebald, and Midtown and will be on tour early this year with Brazil. The deep rooted backgrounds and years of experience held by Kissing Chaos' members have definitely allowed these boys to shine and they are unquestionably poised to take the world by storm.
www.kissingchaos.net

Tom

David Cross
"Shut Up You Fucking Baby!"
(**SubPop**)

From the bowels of the dirty, sometimes horribly inept but always clever now cancelled HBO skit show, 'Mr. Show with Bob and David', comes a two disc standup record, minus Bob. Yeah, it's David Cross. You may remember him from other memorable film moments like the coroner in 'Men In Black', as Dwight in 'Scary Movie 2' or the fake Pootie in 'Pootie Tang'. He also is the star in 'Run Ronnie Run!', a great film (saw a bootleg) based off a sketch from the HBO show, and may never see the light of day due to haggles with distribution. So, he's been in some movies. David's also a comedian whose specialty tends to hover around popular blacker comedy like religion, drugs and homosexuality. And it's fucking funny. Is it worth buying? That's hard to say. Comedy albums suck due to their limited repeat factor. Buy a music CD that becomes your favorite and you very well may spin that disc over a thousand times; how many times can you listen to the same jokes? Luckily, this is a full two disc set which makes this a two hour job, and it's fantastic. I would recommend this to anyone who enjoys the above mentioned subjects. Do some research, check out Cross's stuff, and then go buy this album.

www.bobanddavid.com

PR!

Final Plan/My Luck
"Closed Casket Secrets"
(**Thorp Records**)

Thorp Records presents two ferocious hardcore bands that absolutely punish my ears. Final Plan is one of those extremely heavy bands with extra deep guitar riffs that change pace often. The guitar wouldn't sound right without the super fast and excellently timed drums. Unfortunately, the lyrics sound something likethesewordslook. The lyrics de pend onthemusic and have norhyme orreason totheirdelivery making them sound haphazard and makingthesinger soundlikea barking dog. My luck comes on and quite frankly, I was ready for them. This is one of those bands where the instruments go crazy while the lead singer pelts out lyrics that only he can understand. This guy could be saying "when I go to the grocery store I buy milk" or "the first thing I do in the morning is stroke my cock-n-balls" and I wouldn't know the difference. Despite, I really dig this band because it is one of those penetrating and sporadic hardcore bands with the muffled hard to understand lyrics that get me in the pit. Pretty cool shit. www.thorprecords.com.

Tom

Until the End
"Let the World Burn"
(**Eulogy Recordings**)

I just finished reading "Cat's Cradle" by Kurt Vonnegut. It's not about the world burning, but about the world freezing. Well, it's not really about that, but that's what happens in the book. I didn't really like it. And I don't really like "Let the World Burn" either. I mean, it's not bad. Mean Pete's vocals are just as heavy and throaty as in the past, but it seems he's taken a serious turn for the negative. This new CD boasts six new tracks as well as three live offerings recorded in Geneva from their last album. While still sounding like Hatebreed (without, it should be noted, simply copying their style) Until the End's second release on Eulogy has more of a frenzied pace than their previous recordings, but their signature brutal breakdowns are still intact. Indeed, when coupled with the paralyzing and dizzying array of drums and bass, Mean Pete's vocals are enough to produce some serious vertebrae compression. Still, there's a definite undercurrent of nihilism within this straight edge opus. Dude, if you're bummed at your lifestyle then don't take it out on the rest of us. Take stock of your life, have a beer, and don't sit there trying to depress the hell out of me. And don't burn my damn world, either.

www.xuntiltheendx.com

Brian Greenaway

Kicked in the Head
"Salita"
(**Resurrection A.D.**)

This is my first CD review of the month and it's an EP. Just a little five-tracker. That might not mean much to you, but that's because you don't have thirty-plus damn reviews to write. During the laborious music review process I usually save the EPs I get as a little break for myself. You know, less music means fewer words to write and all. But here I am, eating my desert first, in a manner of speaking. And my desert doesn't even taste that good. Kicked in the Head combines elements from a few other rock bands and the result is a generic sort of Rock 'N Roll that is self-important and a little pompous. If it's your first record you can't be sitting back singing about "those were the days, yeah, those were the days"-save that for when your supple young bodies have been ravaged by alcoholism and late nights with women whose names you don't remember. The guitars are prevalent and heavy throughout "Salita" and are best used on "Arizona", a good driving song. Unfortunately, I'm sitting at my PC instead of on the PCH (pretty clever, huh?) and the Stone Temple Pilots routine is getting a little stale. Included on this enhanced CD is a live video that didn't work on my computer. I wasn't really that upset about it.

www.kickedinthehead.com

Brian Greenaway

The Blow
"Bonus Album"
(**Secretly Canadian**)

As my wife so eloquently put it "The Blow, blows!" Frankly, I have to agree with her because I just don't know where the hell this stuff fits into the whole music scene. Most of this album is filled with low-fi effects, erratic guitars and drum beats which are supported by lyrics that often are not even words and are more grunts or just noises that came out of someone's mouth. These noises include, but are not limited to "Oh, oh, oh whoa, oh, oh, oh" and "Oooh." I'm still not convinced these people realized they were recording anything at all or that they made a record that has been released to the public. What the fuck does this band do on stage together, play patty-cake? The only track I would call a song "Watch The Water Roll Up" is actually pretty good. It sounds kind of like a Caribbean song you would hear on a vacation. The Blow's songs are sluggish and end abruptly (as if this is even possible). This is certainly not something I would recommend.

www.krecs.com

Tom

Liar's Academy
"Trading My Life"
(**Equal Vision**)

Oooookay, and this band got signed onto Equal Vision because why? Not to be a label fluffer, but when you're used to getting apples and then get a banana, Confucious rears his big, pimply head and says, "wahh?" This is a radio rock EP, simply put. Bland, boring, bland and boring are the tracks. And I can stomache the musicians that this is (pathetically) trying to emulate: Wallflowers, um, Puddle of Mudd... you know, the filler stuff that get's played on your local "cutting edge, rock your vagina!" radio station in between the White Stripes and that Queens of the Stone Age single. And I haven't even gotten to the lyrics. "Is anybody out there?" Those four words should draw the line between us (sane music lovers) and them (shitty music suppliers). I can't do enough hand guestures and disgusted facial expressions to amplify my pure displeasure of listening to Liar's Academy. It's not *terrible* (terrible being setting a microphone next to a baby and then beating the child with a cat) but I'm not going to do the what I like to call the 'RBO', or 'reviewer-bend-over' and call Liar's Academy's release "solid" or "nice production" because any talentless sack of cocks, err, musicians can get good engineering and production these days. Oh great, now the chorus "it's not me, it's you" is playing, over and over and over. Can your radio hooks be any more fucking blatent? Blech.

www.liarsacademy.com

PR!

Howie Beck
"Hollow"
(**Future Farmer**)

This guy sounds so much like Elliott Smith. The vocals and the acoustopop music are as close to Smith's as one can get without copyright infringement. Even the lyrics are as similar as can be, dwelling on pain and sorrow, with moments on certain refrains being left to breathy whispers instead of outright singing or moaning, a la Smith. Ah, but Elliott tends to leave the alt country twang out of his melancholy. Not so with Mr. Beck. And Mr. Smith likes to keep a moderate tempo throughout his albums, whereas Howie likes to buck the monotony, adding beefier drums and strummier guitars here or there. But alas, there are just too many sames, leaving a strong Elliott Smith aftertaste where there should be none. It's a shame, because Howie Beck could have been the next Elliott Smith had Elliott Smith not already been that already.

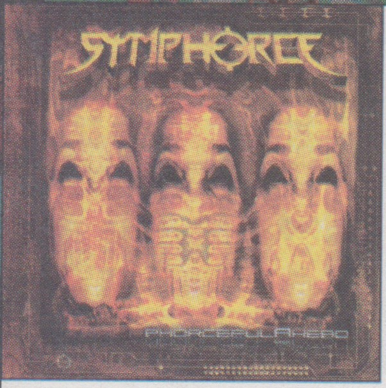
smc

The Young and the Useless
"Self-Titled"
(**Thorp Records**)

I went down to LA last weekend. I was hoping I'd run into Kelli Skye, but I'm not even sure if she lives in LA, so I had to admit my chances of just randomly bumping into her were pretty small. I decided I'd go to the mall, 'cause that's where all cool kids hang out. I tried to even further increase my chances by posting up for extended periods at hip stores I figured she'd frequent, like Wet Seal, Dalias, and things of that nature. I didn't see her, but I also don't know what she looks like, so that didn't help matters either. What I did get to listen to on my drive down was this new EP from TYATU. They're a punk band with a hardcore singer, so they've got that mismatch dichotomy going on. There aren't gnarly most beats and pounding guitars here. Instead, TYATU opt for more soulful interludes and even a few melodies scattered in for good measure. Don't think these guys are soft though-there's plenty of punishing action to be had throughout the release. While many of the vocals remain unintelligible, the lyrics I was able to make out sounded vaguely positive, rather than the nihilism I was expecting. I always like to be surprised. Sometimes with flowers. For Valentines. Because you know you miss me.

www.thorprecords.com

Brian Greenaway



Symphorce
"Phorceful Ahead"
(Metal Blade)

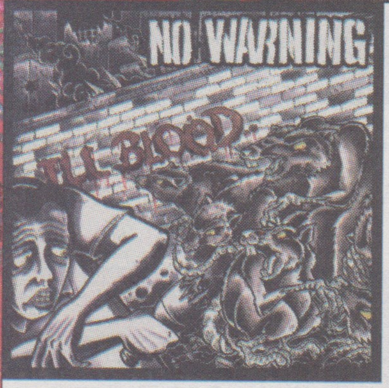
First, the band's name. It's a combination of the words "symphony" and "force." With this bit of nonsense in mind, I'd say Symphorce is neither particularly symphonic nor forceful. Rather they're just laying back and taking it like a bitch. The only thing Symphonic are the silly keyboards, which are more of an after thought than anything fully integrated. Wait. The second song is far more entertaining. It's actually very good power metal. So now we find the band in action and somewhat forceful. Not symphorceful, mind you, but they hold their own amongst the bad boys of power metal. The vocals are strong and unwavering, the drumming keeps strong fist-pounding beats and the writing ain't too bad either. Well, that seems like a rather sudden turn around from my initial reaction written while listening to the first track on the album. Let that stand as a lesson. Bands must put one of their strongest songs forth first on the album. Lots of record reviewers listen to about the first three songs when forming an opinion, sometimes less. I'm typically not one of them, but in a pinch I'll write a review based on one or two tunes. I know it's unfair and try not to do it too much, but I'm easily tormented by music. When it's bad; it's bad and I simply have to yell, "CUT!" So, Symphorce, if you the reader have read beyond the first couple sentences of the review, isn't all that bad as I was first positing. Nay, to the contrary they are a remarkably average group of lads playing fair to midland power metal. Yup, dead average. But that's a good thing. It means around half of all power metal bands are worse than Symphorce. So you see, this is a positive review. God, I am such a nice guy! Really.

DICK

Nodes of Ranvier
"Lost Senses, More Innocence"
(Facedown Records)

This is the debut CD of a Midwest band that plays metal, heavy hardcore. The CD is hard to listen to for many reasons: the screaming/singing is annoying (proof that just because you can growl doesn't mean that it sounds good), the guitars are high-pitched and screeching, and it is music for the lord. Not saying that just because a band is religious means they are no good, just that it gets hard for non-believers to listen when they feel they are getting preached to. After attempting to listen to the CD a few times, I finally tried to decipher the lyrics, which are printed in cursive writing that's hard to read. I finally realized what the man was screaming about: his savior. If you are into metal/hardcore for Jesus, then you might appreciate this more than me. www.hxc.com/nodesofranvier

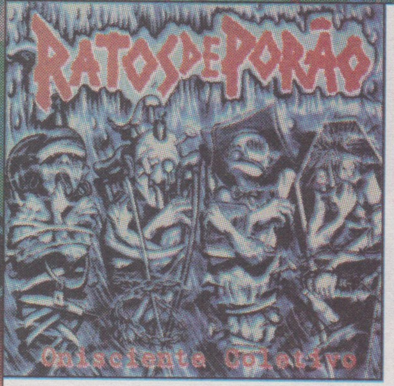
Angela Brandt



No Warning
"Ill Blood"
(Bridge 9)

No Warning is hardcore and they are from the East Coast. Why are all the good hardcore bands from back east? There must be more to be angry at back there. My roommate Carolyn is in New York right now and she said it's freezing. I just returned from a leisurely jog down to the beach in the warm California sunshine and I really can't think of anything to be mad about. So I guess my theory is these guys in No Warning must be upset about the weather. So instead of singing, "I will remain convicted / It's not up for discussion / We're not looking for another way" on "Leech", what they're really meaning is, "Damn, it's cold / Wish it was warmer / Let's move to Florida". No Warning combine plenty of NY-style hardcore in the vein of the Cro-Mags with a fair dosage of aggression and a splash of little mosh breakdowns that are surely the highlight of their live shows. Not too shabby for a debut effort but I'll take a sunny afternoon and a Jimmy Buffett album nine times out of ten.
www.nowarninghc.com

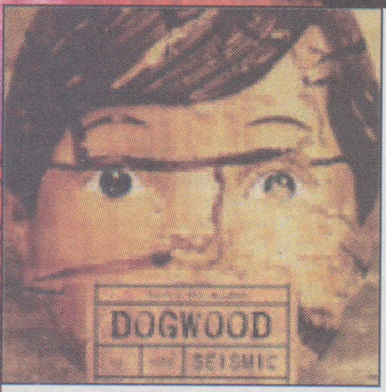
Brian Greenaway



Ratos De Porao
"Onisciente Colectivo"
(Alternative Tentacles)

New from Alternative Tentacles comes the latest album from that other band from Brazil, Ratos De Porao ("Basement Rats") If you haven't heard this band before, and I thought everyone into metal when Sepultura's "Beneath the Remains" broke out big time in the U.S. did as Ratos De Porao were instantly linked to the big "S" simply for being a loud, rough and tumble group of hardcore rockers from the same 'hood as the Seps, then you should lend them your ear. Although the similarities between Sepultura and Ratos De Porao are few and far between there is a similarity there never the less. This album by far outshines the Ratos De Porao I heard back in 1988. Then, I thought they were sloppy noise artists. Now they're tight as a newly strung tennis racket and even though they're still noisy, the noise is brilliant. The music is tough and driven, equally marked by influences from the hardcore side of the world and the uber-fast Slayerama riffing of old. This is a great album. I'm getting more and more enthusiastic about it as each song ends and gives way to the next. What rhythms! What joy! What exuberance! Get this. It's already a classic in my mind. Oh, and don't let me forget that I find the bands unflinching straight-forward politics with an eye on U.S. foreign policy both refreshing and necessary.
www.alternativetentacles.com

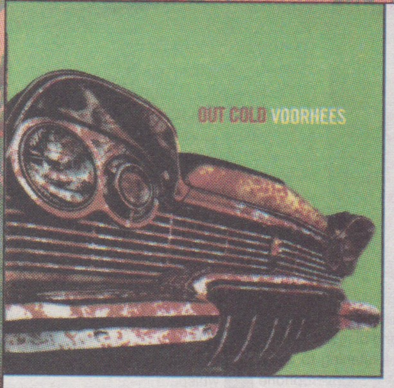
DICK



Dogwood
"Seismic"
(Tooth & Nail)

Word up! Full on punk influenced rock music with clean deep vocals that can really sustain. I think this is the first Tooth & Nail band that I've really liked in a long time. For those of you keeping track I really dig "Seismic", "Sunsets Are But Once A Day", and "Last Of The Lost" because they just kick ass. At their best Dogwood put bands like NOFX to shame. Shit, now I really want to go listen to Diesel Boy or Millencolin and get irie. The best thing about bands like this is that they are fun as hell and not too far off course for any listener. I put this disk on while we were playing quarters one night and had to make four copies by the night's end. Every time I throw on a new disk at my house it costs me a butt load of burned CDs. Ah well, me and my friends are getting down to Dogwood, why don't you try.
toothandnail.com

Tom



Out Cold & Voorhees
"Split-CD"
(Thorp Records)

Man, you people all know I get bitter when a band releases an album where all the songs sound the same. I mean, what's the point? I'm not going to beat this dead horse anymore. Still, the guys from Thorp Records have taken it one step further by releasing a split-album where both bands play what appears to be the exact same song eleven consecutive times. Out Cold is an American hardcore band that begins each of its five tracks with a few raggedy guitar chords before a vocalist who took lessons from a Howitzer screams for a few minutes before ending the track in a burst of drum fire. Voorhees is a UK hardcore band that begins each of its six tracks with a few raggedy guitar...hell, I can't even do it. I was just going to repeat the last sentence and hope that it would be funny but I can't make myself do it. First of all, I'm not sure it would have been funny. Secondly, who's got the time for repetition? If you like thirty minutes of constantly harsh guitars, shrieking vocals, etc. then this one is for you. You're not one of those people are you? You wouldn't want to hear, "Do the head trip to fuck me up / Heart caved in, you fucked me up" set to the lovely tune of brackish power chords ad nauseam would you? Hey, I'm talking to you! In the red shit! Answer me when I'm asking you a question, dammit!
www.thorprecords.com

Brian Greenaway

Open Hand
"The Dream"
(Trustkill Records)

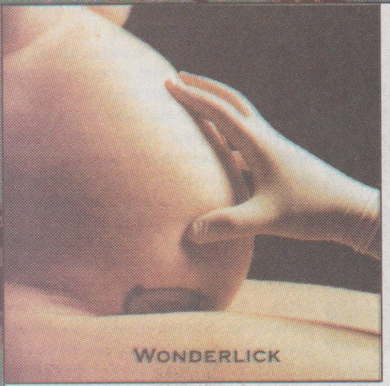
It's almost Valentine's Day. I have this shirt I wear every Valentine's Day. It's an old, black Bouncing Souls t-shirt I got from the first punk show I ever went to. It's got a broken heart on the back and it's all torn now and I really only break it out for special occasions. I figure it makes me both punk and sensitive, and therefore irresistible to women. Punk and sensitive is a good way to describe Los Angeles' own Open Hand. "The Dream" finds the foursome embracing both the passion of hardcore with the emo trappings of Thursday and The Juliana Theory thrown in to boot. "Life As Is", the first single from the album brilliantly showcases the dynamic tension between the heavy guitar driven riffs and the melodic aspects of Justin Isham's vocals. Isham's vocals have the tendency to turn from naughty to nice at the drop of a hat, similar to those of LA's other emo-core powerhouse, Thrice. My favorite track is "11th Street", a hauntingly heavy piece complete with ethereal backing vocals and lyrics worthy of getting stuck in your head, unlike that stupid-ass Budweiser ditty that is floating around in there right now.
www.openhandmusic.com

Brian Greenaway

Jettbrando
"Jagged Junktion"
(Go Kart Records)

Experimental trancey rock, that will mess with your head. Dark fuzzy guitars that are kind of on the back burner, served with a side of jazzy drumming, and Coldplayesque vocals, seasoned with some groovy bass lines. Jetbrando has a laid back vibe and as my roomate put it, "is a hot fuck album". I can see myself on a dinner date takin' down a choice filet minon with some red wine, and afterwards taking my unbelievably hot date to an artsy, dimly lit bedroom at which point I would throw in "Jagged Junktion" and we could just spoon each other all night.
www.gokartrecords.com

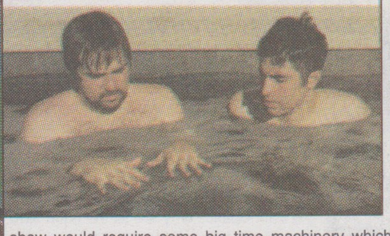
Thom C.



Wonderlick
"Self-Titled"
(Future Farmer)

Easy going music. That is confused in direction, and all directions are wrong to begin with. Some songs are the 'guy and his acoustic' singing about, yes, love. What is it about an acoustic guitar that makes any dolt think they not only know about love, but they have such an insight, they can put it into a song, and then record it, and now I have to listen to some guy talking about the 'love that will tear us apart again'. Cmon now. An even worse affront is when Wonderlick goes for this, euro-trash bubble gum electronic approach. I almost got interested when "How Small You Are" worked this pristine female vocal in, but then the main guy singer came bouncing in and now it's Nerf Herder rhyme schemes on dismissible electronic backbeats. The lyrics are very trite and sing-songy. There is a difference between vocal melody, and driving a pattern into your head because it gets so annoyingly predictable. And when I actually brave putting my full attention into the lyrics, this is what I'm rewarded with "I wanna love you - I wanna treat you right - I wanna rub you - And hold you through the night". If this actually gets this guy laid, I am truly amazed at what you women will put out for. "There's a black box recorder in my heart - It's always on in case disaster starts - If I explode the box becomes a prize - they'll play it back just to hear your lies". Ok now, that doesn't even fucking make sense. I want to bash my head against the wall for wasting this many words on this. I would make some clever play on their name to make fun of them, but hey, Wonderlick is stupid enough.

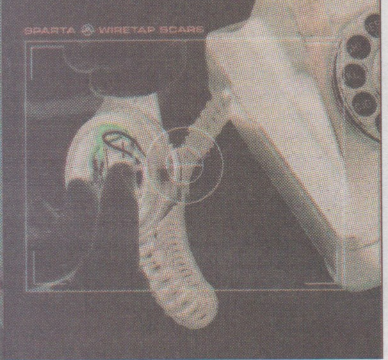
Davros



Slow Reader
"Self-Titled"
(Fueled By Ramen)

It is rare that a record leaves me completely speechless, but slow reader, remnants of famed The Impossibles with Rory Phillips and Gabe Hascall has done just that. Rory has written an absolutely perfect electro acoustic pop record with hi and lo fi that is lyrically engaging and just flat out mellow brilliance. Musically, expect a mixture of drum sampling, acoustic hooks, spacey keys, and vocal harmonies that make the hair on the back of your neck stand up straight. The more notable tracks include "cold cold death", "aging in rhythm", and "sweetest suffering", but there is not one blemish on the entire record. A Slow Reader show would require some big time machinery which would include a big ass computer and an acoustic guitar because there is a significant amount of sampling, but this doesn't take away from the record at all. In fact, the effects and sampling are part of what make this debut so memorable. Pop brilliance such as this only comes about once in a blue moon.
www.slowreader.net

Tom



Sparta
"Wiretap Scars"
(DreamWorks Records)

From the didactic dickheads at Rolling Stone to the jack-off jackasses at Stuff, a lot of critics are getting behind this album. Unfortunately, this time I must agree with the staff at Rolling Stone (motto: "sodomized monthly by MTV"). "Wiretap Scars", the best album from a band with a six-letter name since Dredge, cuts with a melodic edge that reaches high into the air before crashing to dig for deeper skin and bone. The poetic vocals leap out from dormant chants into rageful choruses reminiscent of a mixture of Billy Corgan composition and rhythm and Frank Black belligerence. Accenting wispy but driving guitars, hints of machinery and light alien programming create a moody sonic backdrop that nicely destabilizes intermittent bouts of subtle and aggressive drumming. Sparta spawned from last year's disappointing breakup of At The Drive In. But while Sparta contains (in a little glass jar) three members of ATDI, the new band sounds original and inventive, not a derivative idea but a continuation of talent and style. Get this album.
www.spartamusic.com

Winston Smith

Jello Biafra
"Machine Gun In The Clown's Hand"
(Alternative Tentacles)

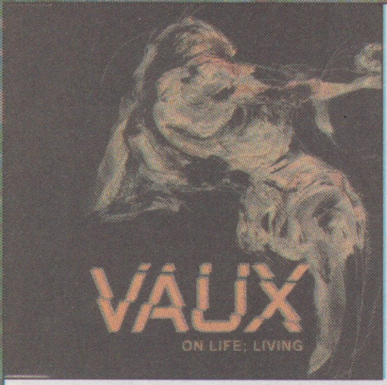
"America is now under marshal law," begins Jello Biafra on his new spoken word CD. He continues, "See how easy it is to get people to embrace fascism by putting a bad guy in a turban on TV?" On this, Jello's 7th big spoken word album he aims heavily at the Bush administration and their seemingly criminal conduct both before and after entering the Whitehouse. Jello takes a close look at the media spin on the events of September 11th in the United States and compares them to the way the rest of the world looked at the events. He cites business connections between the Bush family and Bin Laden family and discusses the history of the United States' foreign policy in the Middle East in terms of their oil reserves. He goes on to analyze the Saudi funded Madrass religious schools in Pakistan, many of which train and condition their students into fundamental Islamic extremism. But why do these Madrass schools exist? Because, as Jello says, the Pakistani government cut their funding for public education to such an extent that there are very few schools still open and the ones that are have no windows and are lucky to have books. Why has public education been kicked into the gutter in Pakistan? Because the Pakistanis funneled all that money into their nuclear program and the military. This is the same road were heading down in our own country. Jello discusses the problems to point out how simple it is to remove those problems, and then he gives solutions. Sure, they're solutions to our problems with the Middle East and the impoverished hungry former Soviet block countries that many won't like, but they are in many ways the most practical and simple solutions I've yet heard. I won't tell you Jello's solutions here because I want you to buy his album. With all the heavy political content I must also remind people that Jello is a wonderful performer. Aside from being enlightening, enraging and fascinating "Machine Gun in the Clown's Hand" is also very funny. Even though some of the material is already dated it doesn't matter; it's entertaining. Jello's delivery and timing makes it all new.

DICK

Lozenge
"Mishap"
(Sickroom Records)

Methamphetamine is a fucked up drug. If you want to try it without actually doing it, listen to Lozenge. Look out though because the shit will knock a screw loose in you're cabeza. My main challenge for this review: describing to you accurately how these guys really sound. OK, imagine every instrument playing almost nonsense but still staying on time and in key. It's orchestrated noise. I'll give Lozenge some serious props cause this is some of the wackiest shit I've heard in a long time. Chunky guitars and bass, metal objects being banged on, screaming insane lyrics, it's pretty far out. If you need a serious alteration in you're daily vibe, toss in Lozenge. Just don't go grinding you're teeth or picking at your nails.
www.sickroomrecords.com

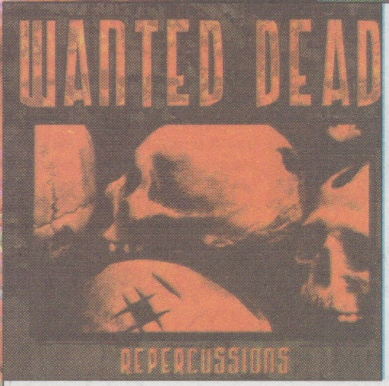
Thom C.



Vaux
"On Life; Living"
(Volcom Entertainment)

Volcom has become a Generation X, extreme sports and now music conglomerate. Pretty soon they will have their own HungryMan Dinners in your local grocer's freezer. I just tried the new detergent and it really does get the dirt and grease out better than Tide or Clorox. Vaux is one of the first acts added to the latest Volcom subsidiary. They are sort of a Deftones style screamo band that would go well with, but in no way could replace, Thrice or Thursday. I really like the vocal harmonies on "We Speed" because it gives that full screaming voice with the spoken word effect so that you can easily understand the lyrics. In skeptical reflection on big business and becoming a big business, I fear that this group, who is probably fairly new, will gain instant success because of the label (and the money behind the label) while other more polished independent hardcore acts will go unnoticed for their hard work and dedication to music. "On Life; Living" is a fairly good ep that is only slightly cliché.
www.volcoment.com

Tom



Wanted Dead
"Repercussions"
(Chunksaah Records)

More than one punk band has proclaimed punk rock's immortality and Wanted Dead is no exception. The first track off Repercussions screams "Punk rock will never die!" The only difference between every other punk band and Wanted Dead is that I believe them when they say "Punk rock will never die!" As long as these four guys are driving around in their station wagon and unleashing their relentless rock on the masses, I can rest assured that punk is living the good life. Repercussions is fast, furious and spitting in your face at every turn. The album's liner notes contain a short thank you list from the band that reads: "Wanted Dead would like to thank no one for nothing! Fuck You!" Every song is teeming with violence and conjures images of mosh pits filled with broken bones, shirtless guys, fondled girls and bloody faces. The only downside to Repercussions is the similarity between songs. But when has true punk been about giant leaps in style on a single album? Wanted Dead sounds like The Voodoo Glow Skulls without the brass. They cram 15 songs into 28 minutes and 31 seconds. Most of the songs clock in under two minutes and the longest epic is two minutes and 36 seconds. Wanted Dead doesn't fuck around. They get to the point, they say and play fast and don't give a shit about you or your friends. But they hope you buy their album. Hugs and kisses.
www.chunksaah.com

Pete Soyer

Ten Grand
"The Comprehensive List of Everyone who has Ever Done Anything Wrong to Us"
(Sickroom Records, Ltd.)

Combining strained vocals, interesting musicianship, and appropriate noise Ten Grand create a well-balanced piece of work. The computerized voice rambling off unknown names and experiences develops into a reoccurring theme throughout the disk and in a way ties the songs together. In addition, the songwriting fits well with the vocal style which does not detract or take away from the music but instead adds to it. One of the more interesting aspects of this record is that it includes parts that you wouldn't expect to come after one another, such as the break halfway through "Never Let your Girlfriend go Camping with that Guy She met in Pottery Class...Trust Me," and the slight timing shift in the anti-climatic ending measures of that same song. Other instances, however, show a more predictable process but Ten Grand makes up for it, to a degree, in quality. Basically, Ten Grand has orchestrated a record that is very unique overall and worth listening to.

Chris W

The Rum Diary
"a key to slow time ep"
(Springman Records)

The Rum Diary's website opens with the phrase "We have no choice but to deafen you." Prepare to be deafened by music as aggressive as baby birds. The Rum Diary may be able to deafen someone if the volume was turned way up, but in sheer crunching guitars and crashing cymbals, they are lacking. But that lacking makes them great. A smooth ride through "a key to slow time ep" leaves your ears feeling like they just heard a spring rain. The Rum Diary sounds a little like Death Cab for Cutie and American Football on a mellow day. The second track, "Sathergate," would be at home in a modern western as the credits roll after Val Kilmer strolls off into the dusty sunset with Denise Richards on his arm. "the day dale earnhart died" is a great title and great opener for the ep. The lyrics of "I want a racecar" keep circling like Nascar racers making laps. The whole package gives the listener a sense of somberness. The cover photo of the ocean, the inside diagram of "The Bottle Popping Case" and the mellow blue and yellow on the CD itself make me feel calm. Soft guitars and soothing vocals are spread throughout the album. Definite mood music for going to sleep or going to bed.
www.therumdiary.net

Pete Soyer

Today is the Day
"Sadness Will Prevail"
(Relapse Records)

Have you done your Christmas shopping yet? Of course you have, because by the time you're reading this it's already January (even February, possibly) but as I sit here in front of my computer on this chilly December evening, there are still seven shopping days until the 25th. So, I'll check my list and see if there are any schizophrenic, clinically depressed metalheads on it who could use either a bullet and a gun or this double shot of Today is the Day. This double disc has enough metal on it to qualify as some kind of supplement for anyone suffering from anemia. Brutal and abused musical structures that feature super-technical drumming (I thought they might have used a machine) and quick as lightening power chords dot the jagged landscape of "Sadness Will Prevail". Throughout the two hours (!) of despondent ugliness and pain exposed by frontman Steve Austin are the repeated themes of alienation and escapism, as song titles such as "Your Life is Over" and "The Ivory of Self Hate" might suggest. Grindcore tends to be one of those sub-genres that you're either into or you're not. Personally, I'd rather find cancer under the wrapping paper on Christmas than a heavy grindcore album, but seeing as how I have no girlfriend, I'll take what I can get.
www.relapse.com

Brian Greenaway

Merauder
"Bluetality"
(Century Media)

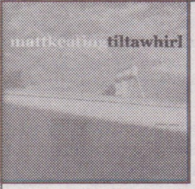
This album should appeal to many. The majority of the lyrics deal with police brutality, as you might guess from the title. Policemen are called boys in blue, right? Thus, "Bluetality." Get it? It doesn't matter. Stupid album title aside this isn't a stupid album. It's good solid hardcore that reminds me of the recent Scar Culture album, but that's no big surprise since they're from the same part of the country and had the same knob twiddler engineer their album, none other than former S.O.D. front man Billy Milano who's getting pretty good at his new job in the studio. The vocals are coarse, shouted and forceful. The guitar is heavy but clear. The drums are a little flat (except that bass drum - lord) and the bass guitar is relegated to where you'd expect on a hardcore album. There's nothing particularly bad about the album although constant references to God are troublesome and nothing particularly standout either although the song "41 Shots" might be worth the sticker price; it's undeniably cool and mean.

DICK

July For Kings
"Swim"
(MCA Records)

Once again, can't judge an album by its cover - as learned by viewing July For Kings "Swim" album cover (a creepy kid plugging his nose as he dives into dark waters). July For Kings kick off the album with an intro that reminds me of flying, the soft guitar vibrating for several seconds transitions into "Believe," a catchy-melody with vocals that beg to be fallen in love with. The singers voice has a presence throughout the album that is extremely sensual as the band runs the lines of acts Matchbox Twenty and Our Lady Peace. Each track is definitely radio-friendly and the lyrics flow just like perfected poetry. Their sound hardens up a bit in "Bed of Ashes" with the pinging of the guitar backing the quiet-vocal chorus, then breaking into a fury of bass and drums. Pussy rock, they are not, but there's definitely a soft spot for the ladies to catch on to.

Skye



Matt Keating
"Tiltawhirl"
(Future Farmer)

More akin to the alt country bands of the last decade than anything else, Matt Keating bears a striking vocal resemblance to the Red House Painter's Mark Kozelek, although Matt thankfully tends to keep the pace up a bit. Playing stripped down acoustic folk, Matt sways between country tendencies and down-home Americana storytelling. He has most certainly found his niche though, weaving poetic tales wrapped around engaging and simple melodic arrangements. Combining Elliott Smith's pop sensibilities with The Boss's understanding of blue-collar America, Mr. Keating has crafted yet another high quality work; one worth taking note of.

smc

Neil Perry/a day's refrain
"Self-Titled"
(Robotic Empire)

A 4" disk! Will this thing get stuck in my CD player? Ah, it's so cute, you hardcore guys think of everything. I mean, first it was see through and colored vinyl and now this. Neil Perry has so much pent up aggression. I'm glad he has an outlet like music to let it all out. No really though, screaming hardcore that would make any new born child cry bloody murder, but it's music to my ears. Why can't I have cool guy long hair like Pablo Francisco always talks about. a day's refrain is pretty cool too. After hearing the first band, it sounded pretty similar. Actually, I don't remember if it was this split, but I think I actually had to look at the sleeve to decipher between the two bands. I don't know what I was thinking though because these bands sound nothing alike. Okay, maybe a little. Hardcore you might hear in a dive bar with a big fat red neck for an owner.

www.roboticempire.com

Tom

Jets To Brazil
"Perfecting Lonliness"
(Jade Tree)

A inspirational tribute to the cutting, flesh and bone reality that is life. This is definitely JTB's most polished and complete album to date which is probably attributable to shedding the skin of previous projects and finding their creative niche. The use of piano and therefore the music on "Perfecting Loneliness" is much more natural which was in sharp contrast to "Four Cornered Night" which sounded forced. Thematically, Blake is still that scared and inadequate kid he has always thought of himself. The older crowd will definitely be able to identify with the more mature artists on this album. Somewhere in the way Blake and company became men and so did their listeners. Any of these tracks would be the best one on just about any other bands record, but the more notable tracks include "cat heaven", "autumn walker", "further north", and the lonely ballad "rocket boy". The funny thing about "rocket boy" is it's almost like a story about the artist and his loneliness, but is also about mankind and their starvation to solve life's qualms. Just because texas is the reason doesn't mean you will be handsome if you eat jawbreakers, but I guess it's worth a try. Delicate majesty…

www.jadetree.com

Tom

Neva Dinova
"Self-Titled"
(Crank! A Record Company)

To describe this in a word: somber. This is the perfect music for when life has you down, especially if you're down about relationships. Not unlike Mark Lanegan style dirges with Coldplay as a backing band, this wonderfully melancholic debut will soften even the hardest heart and conjure images of lonesome strolls reminiscing on the past. Thom Yorkiohead can be heard in Heath Koontz' vocals every now and again, but this band maintains a unique personality throughout these ten songs. A strange phenomenon contained on this album is the use of three guitars resulting in a light, almost folksy feel. That many strings usually add up to some psychedelic or fuzzed out heaviness, but here the result is a depth to acoustics. And the use of fan brushes on certain tracks really gives this a warm, jazzy drinks-on-the-couch sort of feel. Well-penned lyrics, which might dwell on the female of our species a bit too much, are engaging and eloquent nonetheless. Exceptional down tempo mope and roll built on mellow and contemplative sounds for those who enjoy songs as well as music.

www.nevadinova.comsmc

smc

.moneen.
"The theory of harmonial value"
(Smallman Records)

Every year I try to find at least one emo record that truly becomes a part of me and really defines what emo is all about. Back in 1988 it was Rites Of Spring and the newly formed Samiam. Today both those bands are gone (Samiam might come back), but they live on in bands like .moneen.. I started listening to emo in about 1994 with Seaweed, Jawbreaker, and Jawbox so you might call me a longtime fan. I would say it is still my favorite type of music because of bands like .moneen.. I think .moneen. has created the best emo record I have heard in years. After being left in awe by the first listen to "The theory of harmonial value" I immediately started the disk over like it is my daily fix of crack. The lyrics are insightful and delivery ranges from soft finesse to powerful soul driven emotion. Yes, the songs actually build up and climax, can you believe it? I can't find one weakness in this record. I hear hints of all the greats such as Hum, The Promise Ring, caP'n Jazz, Sunny Day Real Estate, Mineral, and the before mentioned. These guys are very young so get started on .moneen. early and make them a personal part of yourself.

Tom

Moreland Audio
"Turbogold"
(54°40' or Fight! Records)

Experimental Rock has always been a difficult undertaking. Depending on how it is accomplished, the experimental rock band can keep you gawking with drool dripping from your lip or drive you away. Remember Morphine? Exactly. Well, "Moreland Audio" sounds nothing like Morphine, but still falls into the "experimental" category. Running a tight band with two guitarists, Gary Flom (guitar, lap-steeled guitar) and Ben Davis (Guitar, baritone guitar), and a drummer, Andy Overton who keeps one helluva fluctuating beat going, "Moreland Audio" will suck you into the depths of repetition and ingenuity. Excellent musicians are what separate this band from other failing "experimental" types. I would venture to guess that their live shows are much better then the CD since they typically play off of each other for about 30 to 45 minutes without stopping. Each track, although separate and named, is part of a gigantic music tapestry with no lyrics. In other words, to specifically talk about each track would be pointless since they all lead into each other. As far as a website, the band-titled site is pretty much one page with a few words meaning there's not too much there. Your best bet would be to stop by the record company's website at www.fiftyfourfourtyorfight.com for some band info. Moreland Audio is a great experimental (there's that word again!) rock band but will never see MTV or even MTV2 for that matter. I don't really believe they will gather too much appeal, but they are worth a listen. You have to try everything once, right?

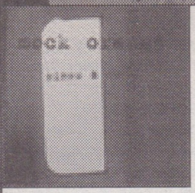
Creedle 110

nice
"my.planet"
(Tankfarm Records)

I'm sorry, but these guys remind me of 98 Degrees and BB Mak. This is the part of the job that I just hate. A bunch of poseurs that I am forced to listen to. I guess the upside is that without hearing the bad I wouldn't know what a good band is. Okay, the first indication that this band sucks ass, there is a credit to Sarah Opstand for make-up. What kind of fruity shit is that. Oh, Ricky, you look so dreamy in your sleeve photo. Fucking pansy. Next indication that this band sucks ass, there is a pop song on the album called "where'd you find that girl" that sounds like Hootie and the Blowfish on one of those quick play tape decks. I mean come on where's the gusto? The last indication that this band sucks ass, the name of this band is nice which is very user friendly to a 13 year old girl's parents. Nice should be put in jail without bail.

www.nicetheband.com

Tom



Mock Orange
"Nines and Sixes"
(Lobster Records)

Crafted and well-executed guitar indie rock. Hear the Braid influences in the struggling guitars, vocal harmonies and penchant for rolling drum beats. The angry bee scrimmaging of guitars in, "Does it Show" play on a muted down stroke that's almost... (hold your breath) metal, but indie rock in execution all the way. I love it when their metal roots peek through even though Mock Orange are too damn sensitive to ever take such a macho road to music. This is in the same vein as Hey Mercedes. Sharp and cutting guitars that blow into walls of warm distortion define the approach most admirably. The ability of the dual guitars to find their own separate paths make it all that much more impacting when they find each other again. It's got melody, sincerity, hooks and a driving force behind the tempos so it never gets watered down. A band that I have never heard of, but now their music finds a welcome home in my player and a live show viewing is definitely in order.

Bushman

Knut
"Challenger"
(Hydra Head Records)

Knut is a dissonant, furious and loud noisecore act that sometimes borders on something resembling a beefed up industrialized form of death metal. The vocals are raspy shouts of angst-riddled intoxication. The drums pound with conviction and more of that angst while the guitars riff, reverb, wail and squeal like a pig. Some people will hear hints of hardcore influence and it has been said that Knut has hardcore influences, but I don't hear it. The band tends to eat its own ass with their over the top deconstructions of traditional song structures causing one song to be mostly indistinguishable from the last. This may prove to be a hindrance for the band, but it does give one a break from the traditional chorus, verse, chorus, verse, bridge, chorus, chorus structure most music has cornered itself into. View the album as one continuous symphony if you must with several (9 to be precise) movements. There'll be no sing along choruses for you from these mathematicians of noise rock so buckle yourself in and don't even try to pound your fist in the air, you'll lose the beat.

DICK

A Crank! Sampler
"Stay Tuned For The Holidays"
(Crank! Records)

Old friend, for sure your time had past, with your dense arthritic arms outstretched to greet what once was great. The girth of your branches shows the true magnitude of what once was a densely populated existence. All has withered to nothingness, but your time has come again, for you remain to bring me joy once more. Crank! has been home to many great bands and now the label has returned with this sampler featuring tracks from Vitreous Humor, The Gloria Record, Far Apart, Errortype 11, Onelinedrawing (live version of "Better Than This"), The Icarus Line, Cursive, Fireside, Jupiter, Sunday's Best, The Vehicle Birth, Mineral ("If I Could," my favorite song of all-time), Acrobat Down, Silver Scooter, Boys Life, Christie Front Drive, and The Regrets. If you are looking for some new bands to listen to there is a gamut of acts I would recommend on this sampler. From your groundbreaking acts such as Christie Front Drive (Jimmy Eat World's mentors), Cursive, or Mineral, to some of the best acts of the day like Acrobat Down and Sunday's Best, there is something here for just about anyone. Help support what is, was, and will be by supporting a label with some of the best bands the Earth has ever known.

www.crankthis.com

Tom

NRA
"New Recovery"
(Gearhead Records)

Why are people from Holland called Danes? What makes them Danish and not Hollish? That really messes me up. NRA are from Holland. By God, I've decided I'm going to call them Hollish. They're a damn Hollish group that musically sounds like Social Distortion and lyrically sounds like Charlton Heston garbling some kind of mindless rhetoric. I wonder what gun laws are like in a Hollish society? If they're rather permissive I would like to have a few shots at some of the members of this band. Their songs all begin with a promising guitar solo and then quickly degenerate into a yell-fest involving some non-Hollish social inequity. If the Holls are more uptight with their gun permits, then I'd just have to use a knife or an ax or something on their recording equipment, which was most likely salvaged from the MIR space station or, possibly from some Soviet black market. The combination of predicable punk songs lacking any ingenuity, a singer who I'm pretty sure I don't even care that I don't understand, and sub-sub-sub standard production value equals one sad, sorry mess. Now, thank God you're from America, go buy a gun (or two) and shoot at any terrorists you might see outside. But not the Hollish-leave them alone.

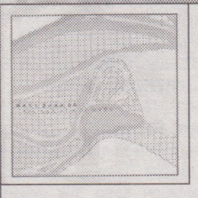
www.gearheadmagazine.com

Brian Greenaway

Botch
"Unifying Themes Redux"
(Excursion Records)

It's tough to say, considering the awe-inspiring music this recently fallen band has made, but this is for completists only. Combining all of the songs from, "The Unifying Themes of Sex, Death, and Religion" CD with 7 additional tracks, including the, "John Birch Conspiracy Theory" 7", the "Faction" 7" (including one previously unreleased song from that recording session), the split 7"s with The Murder City Devils and nineironspitfire, the "I Can't Live Without It", "Brewing", and "All About Friends" compilations, and an instrumental from the demo recordings of their final release on Hydra Head, this is a hearty sock in the nuts for all who loved them. Botch was technical ecstasy. Like Fugazi gone Slayer, Botch made the sounds that bands the world over have wet dreams about. So good it hurts. Even the cover of "Rock Lobster".

smc



Matt Pond PA
"the nature of maps"
(Polyvinly Record Co.)

Yeah, you wish you had this album and got it for free. E-Rock and Bushman sure as hell hooked my ass up when they sent me this mellow masterpiece. This is the fourth full-length release from these indie rockers and mark my 6 font words when I say it is unarguably their best work to date. This is not a far cry from their other affectionate albums such as "Measure" or "The Green Fury", but god damn this band has really come into their own. My favorite part about this band is Matt's voice which has an engaging "I know just how you feel kid" sort of quality which is a testament to his belief in his music and the band. The musical arrangements couldn't be any cleaner either. I love how the use of violins really are the plasma holding the songs together and the guitars are soaring beautiful melodies. Not only that but Matt Pond PA tours like there is no tomorrow. These guys are the quintessential addition to any collection so don't miss out.

polyvinylrecords.com

Tom

Good Clean Fun
"Positively Positive"
(Equal Vision Records)

I am positively positive that this band kicks some major ass live, but then again it's hard not to be kick ass live when your songs are fast as fuck, three chords, screamed in tune, and last about two minutes each. The lead singer of this band reminds me of a local phenomenon called Shelter from the 90s. This band has two tempos in their arsenal, fast and super-fast. My pit sign has always been three fingers straight up right above the head (uh, not sure why) and this band got my old lazy ass in the pit and knocking over some real pussy ass mother fuckers the night I saw them. For anyone above the age of 21 and reading a cool ass magazine like Modern Fix, you probably use to listen to bands like this in high school, but don't let that deter you unless you are a cock-jockey.

www.equalvision.com

Tom

Orthrelm
"2nd 18/04"
(Three.One.G)

Does it matter what one says about an Orthrelm album? This is the second album by this guitar and drum duo that I've had the unfortunate pleasure of hearing. This album (and you'll know it more by the owl head on the cover than by the title) is exactly like their other album (the one with all the black scribbles on the cover), and that is to say it's a mish-mash of hyper-paced guitar soloing and drum soloing. It's not completely chaotic since the drums do follow along with the guitar (and perhaps vice versa at times) but it is impossible to follow. Imagine if John Zorn had never picked up the saxophone but rather the guitar. Now imagine Naked City with no vocals, no bass, no nothing, just guitar and drums. Now imagine Naked City with even less structure. Okay, have you done that? Good. That means you're on your way to understanding the Orthrelm and God help you, you poor, sad son of a bitch.

DICK

Owen
"No Good For No One Now"
(Polyvinyl Record Co.)

Michael Kinsella has been in my headphones in one band or another playing one instrument or another for about six years. Mike is probably my proverbial Elvis except without the gut or the earth shattering following. Mike is one of the calmest and most collected musicians I have ever had the pleasure of listening to and he is Owen. After the demise of the first project that he spearheaded, American Football, he quickly put out the first self-titled Owen record after building a studio in his house and touring as the opening act for Rainer Maria. As for the new Owen album, it is along the lines of the first Owen album except "No Good For No One Now" is more direct lyrically and complete instrumentally. In case you were wondering, Mike sits around with his acoustic guitar and writes very thematic emotional music. Kid you not, Mike's voice is so riddled with emotion that first I want to cry and then I can't stop smiling. Every track on here fits, but the more notable include "Poor Souls", "The Ghost of What Should've Been" and of course "Nobody's Nothing". I personally think Owen puts so many bands to shame and that if people could hear either of his albums just one time their ears would be instantly intoxicated. If you only buy one album this year strongly consider this one.

www.polyvinylrecords.com

Tom

Rise Above
"24 Black Flag Song to Benefit to West Memphis Three"
(Sanctuary Records)

Let's face the facts, most tribute records suck. They are nothing more than a feeble attempt from record companies to cash in on what was already done before. Usually tribute records have no more than a few good tracks, that aren't better than originals, and their lifespan in your CD player is a few weeks tops. With that in mind I was hesitant when I found this Black Flag tribute in my mailbox. Much to my surprise this was the exact opposite of what I had expected. The songs are all done with conviction and remain true to the original versions of these Black Flag classics. Highlights on the record come from a new moderneized version of 'TV Party' by Henry Rollins himself, an energized 'Room 13' by Corey Taylor (Slipknot) and an venom spewing performance by Jeff Moreira (Poison the Well). There are tons of big names on this record all the way from Slayer and Queens of the Stoneage to Motorhead and Ice T. Not only is this a really cool record but it also serves a purpose as well, this is a benefit to the West Memphis Three. "Who the hell are the West Memphis Three?" you ask? Well imagine being stripped of all your rights and imprisoned for a murder you didn't commit. That's exactly what happened to the Jessie Misskelley, Jason Baldwin and Damien Echols. Convicted of a murder they didn't commit and yet they still sit on death row despite irrefutable evidence that they had nothing to do with the horrible crimes. A fitting testament to the bullshit judicial system of the United States. Bottom line, this a great record for anyone who ever dug a Black Flag record and a fitting tribute to the band. My only hope is that the fact that this is a trbute doesn't overshadow the fact that there has been a horrible injustice commited here. Do you part to help the West Memphis Three. Go the website, donate money, write members of congress, something! Anything to help these guys get out of jail. Just think it could be you in their place and wouldn't you want people to help you?

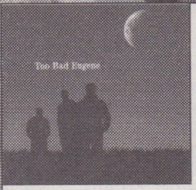
www.wm3.org

James Wright

Premonitions of War
"The True Face of Panic"
(Goodfellow Records)

Premonitions of War is noisy, chaotic death thrash with the vaguest hint of industrial style percussive elements and vocal effects. This is a little seven-song release, an MCD if you will, that will be their last release until their debut on their new label, Earache Records. It makes sense that Earache is to be their new home. The band has elements of both that sludgecore sound embodied in earache bands like Rabies Caste and the more technical death metal sound of December, but Premonitions of War are there own duck, as I like to say. And the name of the band holds well, I mean you don't exactly need a premonition to see the blatantly obvious war the world is about to be thrown into by the United States. I mean, what the fuck, really. We're poised to launch an unprovoked attack on a country that poses no realistic threat to us while here at home we're rounding up people of various Middle Eastern ethnic groups and essentially imprisoning them without cause, justification and without allowing them access to a lawyer. You know, is it just me or do these actions sound like the actions of some country this United States of America was fighting against in the 1940's? Yeah, I don't need no fucking premonition when hindsight serves well enough to see that what this great nation of ours is doing is following militaristically, ethically and racially in the footsteps of the scourge of the mid-twentieth century. Welcome home Adolf Hitler. We sure have missed you.

DICK

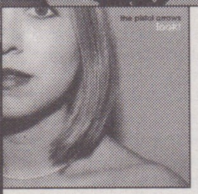


Too Bad Eugene
"Moonlighting"
(Tooth and Nail Records)

Pop punk on the emo tip dawgs! I wonder if some day someone will state "Pop punk is dead" or so and so was responsible for the "great pop punk swindle". Which band would it be? Time can only tell. If you're into The Army of Freshman or Something Corporate than your boat will be floated by "Moonlighting". There's a lot of tender harmonized vocals and fun poppy beats. Too Bad Eugene I feel is out there to make people feel nice. To take your mind off of life and just say "hey! what a wonderful day!". How does that make you feel? Are you ready to feel great, or could you just kick someones face in because of the bullshit traffic you were just in? Either way, their message is that of positivity and that's probably something that everybody needs to hear at some point or another. Do I sound like a hippie?

www.tobadeugene.com

Thom C.



The Pistol Arrows
"Look!"
(Engine Shed Records)

That's exactly what I'm calling you to do "look!" This is a brilliant mellow rock record from one of the hottest new indie acts the pistol arrows. The song writing abilities of front man Eric Sarmiento is just out of this world. Especially on the dream pop ballads "look!" and "tangled and strangled". Also the pistol arrow obviously have some deep country roots that play out on their music with comparisons as far stretching as Grandaddy and Bright Eyes. So in short this music is quite open to many different influences. The hooks are impressive and the band is inventive so if you're looking for that little something this month check these guys out.

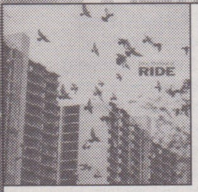
www.engineshedrecords.com

Tom

Various Artists
"Chunksaah Records Presents: The Philadelphia Sound"
(Chunksaah Records)

What the heck was that?! Four bands, eight songs, just under eleven minutes. That was the fastest and (possibly) the most intense 10 minutes and 44 seconds of my recent life. But don't get me wrong, these bands accomplish all that they intend to, and then some, in that time span. Each song is remarkably catchy, especially standout tracks "Not Bad for an Older Brother" by Go! For the Throat and "Anniversary" performed by Knives Out. The former of which is one of the longer tracks on the compilation weighing in at 2:09. And who could go without mentioning the contributions from Dan Yemin and David Wagenschutz who compose one half of Paint it Black. After leaving behind such legendary "punk" bands Lifetime and then Kid Dynamite, these two collaborate yet again with this new project. Their songs on the album seem to embrace the more aggressive side to the two prior bands. In total, this album seems to be a very special expression of this Philadelphia scene that has a very effective hook, and these bands sure can break it down.

Campbell



Ride
"The Best Of"
(The First Time Records)

No really, it is the first time for me. I am sad that these guys have not been integrated into my collection yet. So many of my older friends have told me that I would really like this band, but somehow my money has always been in other places. Even Billy "do it my fucking way or die" Corrigan has put in some kind words about how Ride has affected his mind about music. Now that I have become acquainted with this band I would say it is the wall of grunge, or even before that, fuzz guitars that really set this band apart from their respective counterparts. I can really get into "Drive blind" and "OX4", but given that this is a greatest hits album you could rightfully say any of these tracks are superior to the rest. Get into the roots of your collection and support some fogies.

www.rideox4.com

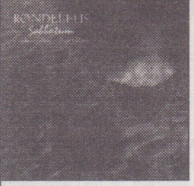
Tom

The Oranges Band
"On TV"
(Lookout! Records)

Interesting vocals from singer Roman Kuebler (of The Thumbs) and poppy instrumentation keep this newest addition to the Lookout! Records family above water. Roman's vocals have that sort of garage rock quality about them, but he fortunately can hit all the notes attempted. The musical stylings are also key because they have the poppy quality needed to make the vocals work. I really like the song "I'm Still Right" because it has this eerie Smiths sort of quality to it and the song short and sweet. At 7 songs and 17 minutes of music this ep is only an appetizer, but with bands like Spoon and The Shins attaining fairly large followings already, The Oranges Band is sure to have quick success if people can get over their godawful name.

www.lookoutrecords.com

Tom



Rondellus

"Sabbatum (a medieval tribute to Black Sabbath)"

(The Music Cartel)

As stated above, this album is a medieval tribute to Black Sabbath. What that means precisely is the album was recorded using only medieval instruments such as the lute, fiddle and harp. All the songs are sung in latin. Needless to say, this album is not for metal heads or even really for fans of Black Sabbath. It's unique. It's good. It's music written by Black Sabbath that I can tolerate. Here we go... I fucking hate Black Sabbath. I know that's not a very good thing for the metal critic at a magazine to write, but it's the truth. I can no longer derive any pleasure from their music. If "Paranoid" comes on the radio I turn the station or better yet, turn the damn thing off. The over saturation of Ozzy Osbourne and his clan of miserable British twats living it up in Beverley Hills sickens me. Kelly Osbourne releasing a CD makes me curl up and cry for the sad and depraved state of the record industry that wonders why they're in a financial slump. Nepotism can take you a long way, huh bitch? The Osbournes' airbrushed, unctuous faces staring at me from the glossy covers of hundreds of news stand magazines is more than I can bear. The greedy little beady eyes of his wife fill me with unbridled and senseless hate. Their sickening self-marketing of themselves makes want to shout "whores," and throw a brick through the television set. That the man who wrote the lyrics to "War Pigs" can dine with the warmongering, mass-murderer who is leading our nation and the rest of the world straight into the worst times of misery and warfare it has ever known is unforgivable. Ozzy, you're a traitor and a slave to your bitch of a wife. Stay off my TV. Fuck you, Mr. Osbourne, and your fecal smeared, republican ass-kissing lips. You're a disgrace. Fuck your sorrowful, boo-hoo, Barbara Walters interview Sharon. When the filthy stinking rich get cancer you won't find me wasting my tears. All the Osbournes are so shamelessly self-obsessed that I can't listen to Black Sabbath anymore without welling up with wrath and thinking about Ozzy's sperm dripping waddling about on the set of NBC's Friends. Believe me, I use to like Black Sabbath. I never held them in such exulted high regard as many others, but I truly enjoyed their music and now those days are over. Thanks a lot Sharon you've turned your whole family into a bunch of whores including that poor boy who once dreamed of being a rock star in the slums of Birmingham, England. What a fucking waste.

www.sabbatum.com

DICK

Raunchy

"Velvet Noise"

(Nuclear Blast)

Somewhere between Nu Metal and classic Thrash you will find the musical stylings of Denmark's Raunchy. The vocals have that irritating Linkin Park over-produced sound quality to them: obviously multi-layered, smooth and nice and then suddenly angry and screaming for no real reason that results in a false emotional crescendo that's completely unearned and typically bland. Raunchy's music on the other hand is far superior to all that Nu Metal nonsense. The band has what one might call a distinctly Nu Metal sound yet the classic thrash and speed influences keep them from submerging beneath the waves of uninspired poseurs out there masquerading as tough macho metal heads. Which when I first got into metal was a contradiction of terms. Sure, metal was largely testosterone driven, but the scene, in general was not. The scene was full of great, friendly and very understanding people. Now there's more attitude in your average heavy metal band than there was in the hair metal poseurs. And, like oh my GAWD! Did you hear Fred Durst is dating Brittany Spears? God, the world is a sad fucking place, but, se la vie, plastic people are as plastic people do. It's good for heavy metal's whiney voiced pseudo-macho man to fuck a Real Doll that magically came to life after being purchased and fucked by a member of N'Sync.

Raunchy!

www.raunchy.dk

DICK

Yeah Yeah Yeahs

"Machine" EP

(Touch and Go)

This EP starts out so fucking cool. "Machine", the opening track, is a rad song with cool guitar sounds and mid tempo drumming that makes me think of... something. A band fronted by a woman! They've got this dirty layer so it sounds cheaply produced, but you can't fool me. This is new wave-ish in the sence that yeah, that genre was creative and all but bleh, I'm bored already. You had me at "Machine"; now your ruining it with "Graveyard". If you dig pedal-ed girl vocals, no bass guitar (something this band could use) and this band's attempt at resurrecting the TOTAL GENIUS of new wave grit, then you are a freak. Or you will like Yeah Yeah Yeahs. I'm torn, since this is an EP and three songs don't exactly give me too much to go on.

www.yeahyeahyeahs.com

PR!

The Natchez Shakers

"Shaker Hymns: Sacred Songs No. 2"

(Thorp Records)

The nine-piece Natchez Shakers orchestrate an album along the lines of a multi-musical sing along type of rock and roll. Some bands have been able to have success doing this and The Natchez Shakers may not be too different from those bands. Many, if not all, of the common elements seem to be there. Not all of the songs have the same exact feel either, granted there is somewhat of a pigeonholing present that they have not escaped, but there are parts of each track that stand alone on the album which is great, that diversity can keep the average listener interested.

www.thorprecords.com

Campbell

Venus 6

"Self-Titled"

(Bone Crazy Music)

The disk starts with a simple two chord number with incredibly easy word schemes that seem like they are trying to see how many words they can rhyme in a row. The female harmonies are pleasant enough amongst this bizarre Go-Go's type rock approach. Mary's Danish fans would appreciate them. There seems to be a lot of keyboard 'squinking' going on, but none of the three females members of Venus 6 are credited. Not sure if I like it, but that's not as important as what it does for the music. It gives that subtle dash of early 80's keyboard charm. A more rock Bananarama? I'm sure the band gets sick of the 'female band comparisons', but too bad. Since most of the progressions are so very used and all delivered in very standard song structure, the easy road to comparison will abound. They should explore more of that experimental angle I hear with the electronic elements and let loose. The slower numbers drag and Venus 6 are better when they keep the pace up as it distracts from some of the mediocre coffee house poetry that spews forth in the most sappy of ways. Thankfully, most of the tracks here move along a semi-rocking pace. The electronic elements up the originality factor a notch, but Venus 6 still have a ways to go before offering anything truly groundbreaking. For now, they are that chick band playing at the dive bar you didn't even know you were going to that night. You won't remember what they sound like do to your inability to control your alcohol. But the next day when asked what you did the night previous, you answer: "Saw some chicks in a rock band".

"Were they any good?" would follow.

"I think so. But I was drunk and vomited on my own clothes."

And then you would stumble away muttering something about how Bananarama never really got a chance to develop.

Bushman

Various

"Songs From the Penalty Box"

(Tooth & Nail Records)

Compilations are always hit or miss - most of the time they're a miss, only containing one or two, at most, listenworthy tracks. Who decides what goes on these things anyway? Even if the band is amazing - sometimes it's as if they pick the groups crappiest song to throw on a compilation. However, there are times when compilations are right on. Tooth & Nail brings a few furious favorites out of their penalty box including Slick Shoes and their song "Alone" which comes straight off their earlier-this-year release. Two Thirty Eight's "Modern Day Prayer" has a rock star intro - not hard, just lengthy, but the song doesn't pack enough momentum to deliver the blow. Further Seems Forever sadly sounds identical to Drive-Thru's Something Corporate, as the vocalists boyish whine in "Wearing Thin" can easily be mistaken for the girlie-rants in SC's "If U C Jordan." The album changes drastically from power-pop-punk to Emo with female fronted, Element 101. Element 101's "The Fragile" sets an eerie stair-desending beat and vocals that sound as if they're coming from a voice box. The singer obviously takes some cues from Tori Amos and Shawn Colvin. Throwing yet another stick into the spokes of this album is Mortal - where the hell did this come from? It has a Techno intro and has been cleanly polished into a metal finish. It sounds like the recruited Satan himself to do vocals for "FLOraclaude." An interesting change up as Bon Voyage's sweet-angelic vocalist then charms through "The Right Amount" in a '50s style diner - doo wop setting. "Songs From The Penalty Box" is a fine mix of all Tooth & Nails genres of music and attempts to expose their finest. I don't know if it succeeds in its' endevours as I end up where I started - skipping back to Slick Shoe's "Alone."

Skye

Orthrelm

"IORXHSCIMTOR"

(Tolotta Records)

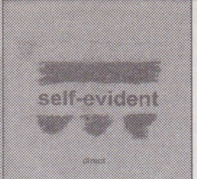
Unbelievable. That's all I can really say. It took half an hour for me to figure out damned name of this album and nearly as long to decipher the silly scrawl that is the name of the record company. This is nothing but drums and guitar. It's an instrumental album and nothing short of truly bizarre. The guitar is fast constant soloing and the drums keep a frantic pace right alongside. Calling this album metal would make as much sense as calling it jazz or freestyle humor thrash. It defies reviewing. It defies sentence structure. Let's see if some random words can do the trick... Frantic, plastic, Hoity-toity, snot pile, suction razor, precision steering alignment, super size fries, who wants to marry a defrocked child molesting priest, noodle knot, corrosion comfort, gastric antecedent, antipodal sixty-nine, last tango in my ass, cracker beacon, insufferable helix, fictional DNA, scribble alert, brain triangle, pudding navigator, nuomenon flesh, skunk garden, metropolitan elephant farm, skank grease, whore shower, booty. I don't know if that will bring you the reader any closer to understanding what I'm listening to, but Orthrelm is a hear to believe it kind of band. They (the two guys in it) are manic. The guitar playing is both highly irritating and jaw dropping. It leaves one mystified, out of breath, puzzled, befuddled and anxious. This is a new genre of music. It's Orthrelm.

DICK

The Gossip
"Self-Titled"
(K Records)

For some reason I'm getting this 2000 Gossip release now, but it doesn't matter. This ep sounds as fresh and bad to the proverbial bone as it did 2+ years ago, which is saying a lot given the short lifespan of most hipster indie bands these days. Wailin', nasty, blues-damaged punk. Sassy and sexy and just plain wonderful. Beth's vocals are truly marvelous, Nathan's guitar playing is a down and dirty blast of swampy joy and Kathi's drumming is spot on perfect. Yeah, I know you're supposed to dance, but this is still pretty damn good to just sit and listen to.

Zack

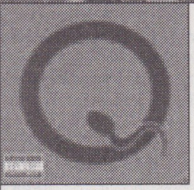


Self-Evident
"Direct"
(Blue Worm Records)

I went to my friend Meghan's wedding in Santa Monica yesterday. It wasn't just any old wedding-it was a Mormon wedding. You have to be a Mormon to go into the temple, so obviously I was out on that account, but the ring ceremony at the Double Tree wasn't that bad. There wasn't any alcohol, of course, but there was a DJ, and boy did he ever suck. He was playing songs that my grandparents probably had played at their wedding. Wedding music should be happy, dance sort of music, don't you think? Self-Evident would be horrid wedding music because it's dark-pop, screamo music. It's good, though. The guitarist is great and the lyrics and musical accompaniment flow together perfectly. The subtle desperation in the singer's voice when he moans, "I would do anything to avoid everything" exactly matches the dissonant minor chords and staccato rhythms. It's tough to judge too much from a little six-track EP, but I like what I heard here and there's reason to expect more from this threesome in the future. And don't forget, just 'cause they don't have beer at the reception doesn't mean you can't get your lazy ass up and walk over to the bar. They'll take care of you there.

www.self-evident.netair.com

Brian Greenaway



Queens of the Stone Age
"Songs for the Deaf"
(Interscope records)

Do you really want to rock? Well, even if you don't the new album from Queens of the Stonage, "Songs for the Deaf" may change your mind. The third release from these Palm Desert locals is upping the ante on all current rock acts. "Songs for the Deaf" is done resoundingly in the Q.O.T.S.A style of rock. Pounding drums with fills in just the right place (Dave Grohl is the third drummer in three albums for the Queens.), complimented by Nick Oliveri's warm, rolling, base lines, and finally Josh Homme's soothing vocals over driving rock riffs with hooks that could nab Moby Dick. "Songs for the Deaf" is an album loaded with blistering tunes such as "First it Givith", and "The Sky Is Falling" which mixes powerful riffs with Homme's melodic vocals. "God is in the Radio" will melt your brain with warm, fuzzy, classic rock smoothness. For someone who is having a hard time getting the jist of this album, I liken it to a horrifying case of the runs. It hits you hard and after a while the attacks settles only to be right back where you were, getting hit hard. Get it?, No? Moving on, the album also features a host of guests including Dean Ween of Ween, Paz Lenchantin of A Perfect Circle, and quite a few others. If you decide to take a chance on a new CD today, go for "Songs for the Deaf", it will rock your friggin' pants off!

Thom Cooper

Various Artists
"How We Rock"
(Burning Heart Records)

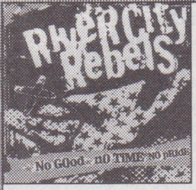
A big ol' heaping hunk of rock and roll. The greasy rock. The dirt on the grill, blood in the gears rock and roll. Most of the bands here, work with an accessible 4 chord, beer-drinking rock formula. Being gathered from the contemporary (or very recent) rock scene, it's the over the top attitude of most of these bands that gives their rock the sweaty charm. Anyone who thinks rock is dead needs to check out this compilation to realize the only thing that's dead, is the media recognizing the worth of good guitar blastin' rock and roll. Many big players in the rock game are represented here. Zeke, Dwarves, The Hellacopters, The (International) Noise Conspiracy, Supersuckers, Electric Frankenstein and Rocket From the Crypt make up less than half of what is offered here. If you recognize those names, you know what kind of rock I'm talking about. Pure garage rock with almost punk rock speeds and definitely a punk rock attitude to a lot of this. Solid gathering of tunes all the way through and I declare this 'The Best Rock and Roll Compilation of 2002'. Rock on.

Bushman

Sepultura
"Under a Pale Grey Sky"
(Roadrunner Records)

A fantastic 2-CD set, capturing the very last live performance of the original lineup of Sepultura before lead singer Max Cavalera left the group and went on to form Soulfly. Recorded in London in 1996, this disk is a monument to one of thrash metal's most defining voices. The Brazilian born group overcame the unlikely climate of their birth and language barriers (the group known to occasionally sing in their native Portuguese) to become one of the dominating forces in late 80's thrash. They released numerous albums incorporating their own cultures sounds and ethics into a metal shell making them unique among their peers. The disk opens with some tribal influenced music before cranking into one of the bands most recognizable ragers, 'Roots Bloody Roots'. Most every track a fan would look for is here. 'Territory', 'Beneath the Remains/Mass Hypnosis', 'Dead Embryonic Cells' all come through like a punch to the face. 'Necromancer' is included (the first song the group ever recorded) as well as 'Biotech is Godzilla' featuring lyrics by Dead Kennedy's Jello Biafra. Almost 2 hours of music makes this live disk a score and a half for the Sepultura fan. Witness the final attack in original form. Very metal.

Bushman

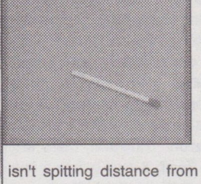


River City Rebels
"No Good, No Time, No Pride"
(Victory Records)

Ska-punk? Is that what I've been reduced to? I have to review a ska-punk CD? Sonofabitch. River City Rebels are one of those bands that will never turn a profit because they've got to split the money like six ways. Vocalist Dan O'Day has got a pretty smooth baritone that is just snotty enough to make you forget for a second that he sings in a group with a bunch of band geeks. The horn section sounds like...well, a bunch of horns. What did you expect it to sound like? It sounds just like the Voodoo Glow Skulls and Buck-O-Nine and all those other bands whose CDs you sold back to the Wherehouse a long, long time ago. How can I love The Clash while hating ska so much, you ask? I think the answer lies somewhere with authenticity. The Clash did more than just have Joe Strummer sing a line then have a chorus of buffoons repeat it back with a cockney accent, which is all River City Rebels seem capable of doing. Just because you wear an Agnostic Front t-shirt doesn't mean you're cool and it sure as hell doesn't give you permission to assault my ears with your faux-British cooing. This enhanced CD features a tour "documentary", the highlight of which is two of the band members showering together. Stoked.

www.rivercityrebels.com

Brian Greenaway



Superdrag
"Last Call for Vitriol"
(Arena Rock Recording Company)

Superdrag is a peanut butter and jelly sandwich. They have been churning out riffs and hooks for years, but have yet to ascend to higher ground. "Last Call for Vitriol" is a solid album, but it isn't spitting distance from their previous three. The songs are strong, but safe. I'm not asking for an "OK Computer," but how about a little envelope push? Superdrag expresses my concerns twice on "Last Call for Vitriol." First, track eight, "Safe and Warm," is exactly what Superdrag is. They aren't a risk, but some listeners only want to feel safe and warm. "Safe and Warm" as a song doesn't stand well on its own. A simple ballad that's idea has been played by everyone from Elvis Costello to Paul McCartney to Mr. Big. "Remain Yer Strange" asks the question: Are you ever going to change? Superdrag has found a way to rock that works, but you can only eat PB and J for so long before you crave something else. Maybe a burrito here, some split pea soup, even rummed up egg nog. "The Staggering Genius" does push rock out like a sweat on a fat man running the mile and gets the ball rolling on the album. "I Can't Wait" and "Remain Yer Strange" are the high points of the album with the quartet hitting all the major chord progressions and tempo changes that make you tap your foot and push repeat. If you are a fan of Superdrag, this album won't disappoint you. If you're new to the Superdrag world, check out their first two albums ("Regretfully Yours" and "Head Trip in Every Key") and hear their fuzz rock when the peanut butter was still fresh.

www.superdrag.com

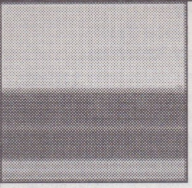
Pete Soyer

Serene
"Self-Titled"
(Arena Rock Recording Co.)

Do you know what onomatopoeia is? It's when a word sounds like what it describes, like "buzz" or "rattle". Serene is sort of onomatopoeic because they are just that. They're soft like Smashing Pumpkins circa "Tonight, Tonight" with mild distortion and gentle fingerpicking leading the sonic charge. There's a lot of Sunny Day Real Estate and Built to Spill influences here, too, particularly when it comes to lead singer Ryan Beatty. Beatty is content to allow the gentle melodies and harmonic keyboards within this brilliant self-titled album control the mood while his serpentine vocals casually augment the action. While the honesty of emo is often corrupted by the desire to add a few poppy licks and syrupy choruses to each and every track, Serene fails to bow to the expected, enabling the subtle darkness within their music to coalesce into a unified whole. Serene's ability to craft a cohesive freshman debut bodes well for you and I, the poor music listeners with no discernable talent of our own, who will surely benefit from having this CD in our collection for many years to come. So go and get this one, you'll like it. Come on, have I ever let you down before?

www.arenarockrecordingco.com

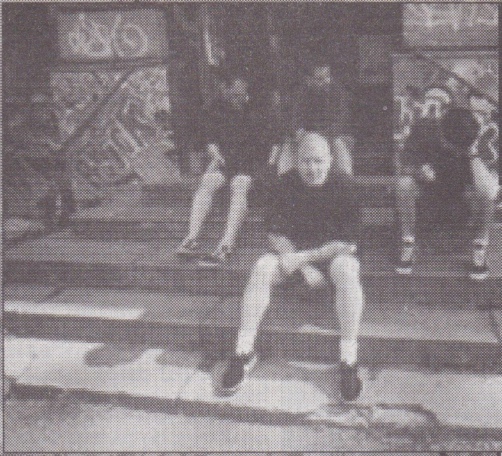
Brian Greenaway

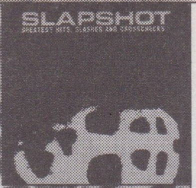


Rizzudo
"Self-Titled"
(Moodswing Records)

Gives me chills all throughout my body as if a wave of emotion just takes me over in an uncontrollable flash. It is safe to say this type of pop brilliance comes about once in a great while. I swear that by the time the vocals start your about as ready as an Irish Setter in heat. Seriously, the guitar acrobatics are damn near amazing with their beautiful melodies and a staunch ability to follow the vocals like they need them and the capacity to change pace on a dime. Actually, I think the vocals are an aftermath in this case. Seriously, teach those guys in Tortoise how to play music, they'd stand to learn a lot. Only seven tracks, you bastards!

Tom





Slapshot
"Greatest Hits, Slashes and Crosschecks"
(Bridge Nine Records)

Slapshot has released this greatest hits record hopefully to a strong fan base that will support it. Aside from established fans and fans of the genre (which seems to be old-school hardcore fused with melody beats and speedy punk in places), I do not know who this record could impress or win-over. I personally did not find it to be mind-blowing but then again, it is a greatest hits album so finding new recruits isn't at the top of the priority list. A real plus for this release was the biography of the band's history inside the booklet and the contents of its enhanced cd package. Viewers can watch selected songs from live show performances, view flyers from the band's archives and go to both the label's website and oldtimehardcore.com. The video quality is fairly decent and it documents the apparent loyal and enthusiastic fan base created by Slapshot.
www.Bridge9.com

Campbell

Since By Man
"We Sing The Body Electric"
(Revelation)

A unique, very well sounding and produced feat. Much like a mix of Blood Brothers, Death From Above, At The Drive In and Race for Titles, there's a lot of elements to be explored. At times, the songs are fast paced and waver towards the edge of choatic indie, and then can merge back into calculated math rock. I really like this album, as it speaks like a band who has multilayored influences from a variety of genres and wanted to make music close to their hearts.
www.revelationrecords.com

PR!

The Used
"Self-Titled"
(Warner Brothers)

So yeah, these guys have a music video and songs on the radio, but I've never heard (of) them. What has this CD taught me? Take everything you can learn from bands like Thrice, Glassjaw, Thursday and Midtown; now you've got what it takes to make a band that doesn't mimic but define a alt-something musical genre. Add some Ross Robinson-sounding drumming, that normal/screamy vocals thing that's getting so popular and you've got The Used. The big single is "Box Full of Sharp Objects" and it's a perfect medium of The Used; this is what to expect. Pretty heartfelt, not as (for lack of better words) abstract as a band like the Blood Brothers but will definitely fit neatly into the fanny pack of fans of this genre. I'm sure this guy (vocalist Bert, who is currently poking Kelly Osbourne daughter) has the kids in front crying the lyrics out with him at shows. With twelve tracks on this release and no real stinkers, it's definitely a decent purchase for those fans, although I had to spin this album at least two dozen times before I could swallow it completely. That, and it's a little bit embarrassing listening to this at the Modern Fix pad, 'cuz it's not very cool or something. Bushman actually came by while I was listening to it and doing this review, and said "so this is The Used?" and then laughed at me, murmuring something about my sexual preference. Fuck you, Mr. Bushman. Fuck you.
www.theused.com

PR!

Tiger Army
"Early Years EP"
(Hellcat Records)

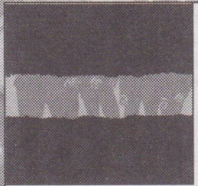
Re-releases are cool right now. If re-releases were muscles they'd be abs. Everyone wants great abs and everyone seems to be falling all over each other, trying to get the most recent re-release by the Butt Water Five, or whoever it might happen to be. This six-track EP by Tiger Army comprises some of the first tunes Tiger Army ever recorded. Their psychobilly style isn't as developed as it is now, but it's clear the basis for their sound hasn't been drastically altered over the years. With the possible exception of the Misfits "American Nightmare" cover, there aren't any jaw dropping tracks that really make you want to rush to the repeat button on your player. The stand-up bass and snare drum running continually through out the album eventually wear thin, but you greasers out there with all of the Reverend Horton Heat releases out there will surely want to gobble this one up. Personally, I already have great abs (Kelli Syke, take note), so re-releases do absolutely nothing for me.
www.tigerarmy.com

Brian Greenaway

Snow Dogs
"Deep Cuts, Fast Remedies"
(Victory Records)

Perhaps the only redeeming thing on the Snow Dogs latest album "Deep Cuts, Fast Remedies" is their choice to cover Paul Simons' song "Boy In The Bubble" in somewhat of a signature punk rock style. It's probably the only interesting tune on the album, unless you're prone to power-punk-pop that contains hints of ska "Hour Of Sunshine" and the occasional use of a drum machine "Freedom For Everyone". As it stands "Deep Cuts, Fast Remedies" is a decent album for this U.K./U.S.A outfit. Though certainly both fans and critics will be expecting better things from them in the future. How about some more Paul Simon covers?

Gordon Downs



There Were Wires
"Self-Titled"
(Iodine Recordings)

How to make There Were Wires:
Follow instructions carefully and watch oven timer.

Ingredients:
1 Tblsp Emo
1 Fresh beef heart
3 human fingers
1 Picture of girlfriend who ruined your life
1 Slayer CD

Dice Slayer CD. Mix with Emo. Set aside
Place beef heart in blender on puree. Be sure to cut yourself on the blender blade as it spins.
Add fingers after three minutes.
Tear picture of girlfriend while crying and screaming obscenities.
Add to heart and finger mixture.
Blend until frothy.
Pour into 9x12 glass baking dish.
Sprinkle emo/Slayer mix on top.
Bake at 600 degrees for seven hours.
Remove immediately with bare hands.
Makes 7 servings for fans of anger, emo and music.
Enjoy.

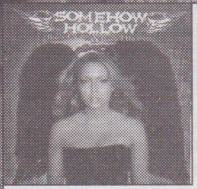
www.iodinerecordings.com

Pete Soyer

The Robot Ate Me
"They Ate Themselves"
(Swim Slowly Records)

From the looks of it, these boys want you to be about as depressed as possible, don't you think? The music is definitely a sad man rendition of "let's see how many ways I can say this hurts". The lyrics are often centered around death and despair, but some how as the track, "We Ate Eachother" so appositely put it "we tried to bring you back, but it was too late". If there is one thing this band wants you to get from this record, it is to live. Live, because you only get one chance. The Robot Ate Me has ideas that make me reflect on myself which is pretty fucking cool if you ask me. Musically, expect a fairly artsy ensemble (and I mean ensemble) that you might have trouble with the first time. But as you make more attempts at giving this a try it will really pay off. It's sort of cool to hear a band's out of this world ideas be somewhat similar to Modest Mouse. This one could easily be difficult for even a true Modest Mouse fan though because the broken thoughts can be misinterpreted as incomplete. Highly recommended.
wwwswimslowly.com

Tom



Somehow Hollow
"Busted Wings & Rusted Halos"
(Victory Records)

I'm sorry, this sounds nothing like a Victory band. What happened to the hardcore? I looked at the back of the disk and the first thing I thought was hardcore, but that's not what I get. Talk about a guy who appears to be something he's not, I was just watching that disgusting special about Michael Jackson and him trying to say he's worth over a billion dollars and that he didn't get any plastic surgery except for his nose. There's a man with some serious problems. Okay focus, for all of you hung up in that melodic sound reminiscent of New Found Glory or other pop acts will really dig these guys. Maybe that is why Victory signed a band like this because they are actually very good for the genre and there is definitely an audience for this type of thing. As an operation, the vocal harmonies and guitar riffs are not too shabby. I would definitely recommend this to anyone into popular culture but not just any indie junkie. I guess when it all comes down to it everything's been done before.
www.somehowhollow.com

Tom

Swearing At Motorists
"This Flag Signals Goodbye"
(Secretly Canadian)

How many stunningly good two-man bands can come out of Ohio? Earlier this year The Black Keys rocked the blues like no white boys ever should. Now it's Swearing At Motorists turn. This is possibly the finest half hour I've spent listening to music in I don't know how long. What these guys have done is to create a two-man soul-folk recording that has true soul and songwriting skills with the power to knock the wind out of you. Velvety smooth vocals that are part Mark Lanegan, part Mark Sandman and all good, singing somber, lethargic, indie-blues songs too beautiful to be depressing. Almost entirely guitar and drums (a few guest instruments do appear) the music is sparse but elaborate, and skillful with mesmerizing melodies filling the broad, inebriated spaces. Incredible in its unassuming excellence, this band is probably the best-kept secret of all those GBV hipster tools wondering why Bob keeps trying the majors. Well, kids, the word is out. Do yourself a favor and sit down with this album the next time you want to drink alone. This is the kind of music beer was made for.

smc

Swindle
"This is Not a Test"
(Slow Gun Records)

This is good punk rock- aggressive guitars, pounding bass, thrashing drums and snotty, screaming vocals. It makes you want to pogo around the room with songs like "GO!", which has more woos than Joey Lawrence on an episode of Blossom, along with words like "my faith in this world is starting to rot." This album entertains and as well as brings up personal and social issues. The song "Lies" is about domestic abuse and "No Reaction" is about suicide. This San Diego band's CD is the complete package; it has insightful lyrics and talented musicians, it is recorded and produced well and it has a cool CD layout and images done by the drummer, Nick Lennen.

www.swindle.ca

Angela Brandt

SpeechWerks
"The Journey"
(Illfold Inc.)

SpeechWerks needs some speech work. The entire album is one beat broken into 17 pieces. The lyrical flow was not strong enough to compensate for the monotony of the music. This Chicago based team has some longevity in the game but it hasn't seemed to aid them in producing enticing tracks. Hopefully you will not be able to locate this album for purchase. Boring and stylistically putrid due to it's repetitiveness and bland lyrics. How the fuck were they able to entice Casual (from Hiero) to do a track? PR! liked this album tho.

Farr

Terminal Sound System
"RH-8SB"
(Relapse Records)

When is the music going to start? Ten minutes later, oh there it is, that's what I've been waiting for, do they realize how short my life is. We're all going to war and fucking Nosterdomis or whatever his name is said the end of the world would start in the Balkans. Why can't we just drive electric cars. God damn it, more of these repeated noises. It's like segue in and segue out and then segue in again. If it's any constellation I pulled out my guitar and used this disk as a metronome.

www.terminal.antisound.com

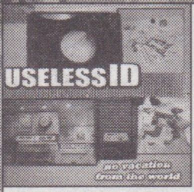
Tom

SR-71
"Tomorrow"
(RCA Records)

Over-produced, unnecessarily-popular and thoroughly lacking in originality, SR-71's second effort, "Tomorrow", is even worse than their first one, "Now You See Inside". As if we aren't subject to enough radio-friendly "rock" music from the likes of Everclear, Eve 6, etc., the eleven tracks on "Tomorrow" offer not one inkling of promise or surprise. Borrowing from the cheesy-punk of Good Charlotte with a little smattering of the electronic flavor found in Linkin Park, SR-71 muddle their way through the album without putting any intro- in their -spective or any emo- in their -tion. What you are left with are pieces of other peoples' music that really wasn't that good to begin with, so how can you win there? Lyrically, SR-71 has about as much to offer as Hellen Keller (who I found out from this great book "Lies My Teacher Told Me" became a super-radical socialist later in her life) at Karaoke Night. The title track, "Tomorrow", is a study in paint-by-the-numbers angst that was undoubtedly supposed to arouse some sort of universal feeling of abandonment but instead reads like a Dr. Seuss book. "Feeling like the walls are growing stronger / I don't know if this cage can hold me much longer / You never dreamed you'd have to live your life so guarded / 'Cause they'll find a way to make you feel discarded.", sings Mitch Allan. Great.

www.SR-71.net

Brian Greenaway



Useless ID
"No Vacation From The World"
(Kung Fu Records)

So it's nearing Valentines Day and I, and I'm sure most of the people reading this review, can relate to Useless ID's "The Worst Holiday I've Ever Had." The poppy song manages to break my heart, much like these type of punk poppy songs do. Hidden in this upbeat track is the message of heartbreak. How do they manage to pull it off such a somber song in such a happy way without sounding suicidal like Depeche mode? It's like the same old story, punk boy falls in love and gets his heart stomped on by some evil pop-princess bitch. It's almost become a standard for these "punk" acts today to include at least three songs about broken hearts. So I'm over it. Each song on this album is extremely catchy, riffy, and fun. Girl bashing aside, the elements are all there that make this a pretty darn good CD, including a classic rock n' roll guitar ending to the appropriately titled exiting track, "End."

Skye

The Metal Years
"3 CD Set - V/A"
(Spitfire Records)

Calling all metalheads and those who claim allegiance to all that is holy and... metal. The closet thing you are going to get to a college level course in contemporary true metal within a compilation. Study at home. Study loud! Broken down into 3 CD's representing 3 sub-genres of metal, 'Power Metal', 'Gothic Doom Metal' and 'Progressive Metal'. To the untrained ear, these differences are minimal. To those who know loud, it's these minor differences that continually breathe life into the genre. Also to be noted, these particular sub-genres are most closely aligned with the traditional, European sense of metal. Dramatic sense of orchestrations and guitars of excelling technical proficiency. The 'Progressive Metal' disk shows bands that favor intricate constructions and passages of music that showcase the dedication to their instruments. Opeth, Iced Earth, Steel Prophet and Jag Panzer were some of the choice bands chosen to represent the progressive metal. The 'Gothic Doom Metal' disk showcases metal with a much more dramatic flair. Theatrical and dark, heavy use of keyboards and generally doom and gloom vibrations. Tempos are not as aggressive, and get downright spooky beautiful at times, but the overall heaviness keeps this in metal territory. Choice cuts by: Anathema, Cathedral, Candlemass and My Dying Bride. The 'Power Metal' CD is the TNT disk of this set. Ripping guitars and speedy tempos shot apart by double bass drum attacks typify this brand of metal. Truly living up to its name, the attack of metal is truly powerful. Big guitars with bigger solos with songs that rip and tear their way through. Best defined on this disk by: In Flames, Hammerfall, Dark Tranquility and Iced Earth. The fact that Iced Earth has a track on two different disk exemplifies how closely all the genres are related, but at the same time, marking the differences that are significant enough to warrant separating sub-genres. One of the most worthy compilations with no track skippers I've ever heard.

Bushman

The Scaries
"Souvenir"
(Law of Inertia)

What's really scary about this CD is how much the Scaries sound like what I want Saves the Day to sound like. Take out some of that whiny sound of Saves the Day and you've got the Scaries. Oh, I'm sure there are other noteworthy differences, but you don't care. Eleven tracks go really fast, although you think they don't 'cause they have this deep, almost Braid sound going for them. Lyric snippet's like "It's always fucking lonely and everyting is cold and empty, I've never gotten over the saddest thing you said" (from "Bleached") won't break the pop lyric mold, but hey, everyone's gotta be depressed sometimes. Decent four piece doing what they do well.

www.thescaries.com

PR!

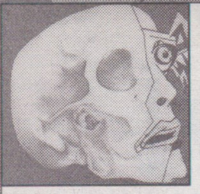
Subb
"Saylight Saving"
(Stomp Records)

This band is totally a Midtown clone, and that's a compliment. Musically, like Midtown, they're really tight. Excellent guitar lines, song structure and general flow in each track really set the stage up for Jeff (vocals) and his singing. And the singing is good; Midtown good. Even got the chorus parts where Mart (guitar) and Stef (bass) who, aside from having completely gay names, chime in succession. The lyrics are the usual stuff; not too much here about the political agenda of the band but things about girls and being young. Songs like "Westside" are catchy and bouncy. If you're into Midtown or practically anything on Drive Thru, check this band out. They do thank the band Fifty Nutz in the liner notes, but that's okay, because Subb knows that they're way better then them.

www.stomprecords.com

PR!

Sweep the Leg Johnny & Rumah Sakit



"Live"

(Sickroom Records, Ltd.)

Live shows are popular. Do you know who grossed the third highest total of concert receipts in 2002? Cher. Seventy-six-point-three-million dollars. That's disgusting. I blame your mom for having such horrid taste. If Cher was third, I'm guessing Sweep the Leg Johnny & Rumah Sakit finished around 17,836,123rd on the list. Sickroom has released a double CD from the two bands September 9th, 2000 show at The Bottom of the Hill in San Francisco. Judging by the crowd noise, all four people in attendance had a wonderful time. Chicago's Sweep the Leg Johnny contribute six tracks with their jam-punk style in full effect. Sweep begin their set in their unique punkabilly way, saxophone wailing and cymbals crashing. It's got to be quite an experience to witness Sweep the leg live, but so much of their flair seems to get lost somewhere in the translation to the recorded medium. Rumah Sakit play some hippie jam rock that is surely all the rage in the Bay Area these days. They're banging on one thing while strumming on another and don't seem to feel the need for any vocals. In a lot of ways they're just an instrumental Sweep the Leg Johnny, minus the saxophone. Surely not the kind of thing that's going to appeal to a lot of you, but for those of you looking for something new while you're lighting your patchouli stick-this could be the one.

www.sickroom.com

Brian Greenaway

Worthless United

"Self-Titled EP"

(Now or Never Records)

There's a good chance that by the time you read this, our country will be at war. If that's the case, then what's the point of reviewing this li'l four-track EP? Who cares if these guys are a four piece punk outfit from the East Coast if our brothers, sisters, and cousins will be dying overseas? Who cares that this is what Operation Ivy would sound like if you sucked the ska right out of them if million dollar bombs are dropping on a bunch of mud huts? Who cares if there's a lot of energy, good direction, and focus on here if, as you're reading this, some sniper is blasting a hole through some guy he's never met? Seriously, who cares? I'm not one of those anti-war-at-all-costs guys or anything. Dude, sometimes you gotta blast some fools if they're messing with your right to live your life. I'm not saying that's what's going on right now, I'm just saying there's a time and a place for everything. There's a time and a place for some good old punk like Worthless United plays, I just hope that time doesn't involve a bunch of people that I know marching across a desert with guns and grenades strapped to themselves, hoping to god they don't see any bad guys that they'd have to kill.

www.worthlessunited.com

Brian Greenaway

Various Artists

"Sucking the 70's"

(Small Stone Records)

Small Stone records corralled 35 bands from six countries to deliver this 2-CD blast of heavy, '70s rock distilled to an even more dangerous proof. This compilation also features the solo debut of Scott Reeder (Kyuss, Unida) delivering a version of "Don't Call Us, We'll Call You", the song Jerry Corbetta wrote while feeling the A&R brush-off looking for a deal for Sugarloaf. Another debut is Broadsword, J. Yuenger's post-White Zombie project. For his first material released under this name, J. chose a version of Sir Lord Baltimore's "Woman Tamer". Modern hard-rock heroes Clutch provide a blistering version of Jethro Tull's "Cross Eyed Mary". The compilation also includes the final recorded piece from Spirit Caravan: "Wicked World" (Black Sabbath). Other standout tracks include Steppenwolf's "The Pusher" as done by Gideon Smith & The Dixie Damned, Iggy Pop's "T.V. Eye" from Dixie Witch and Raging Slab with a clamorous "We're an American Band" (Grand Funk Railroad).

www.smallstone.com

Tom "Tearaway" Schulte

Starflyer 59

"Can't Stop Eating EP"

(Tooth & Nail Records)

If I couldn't stop eating I'd want nothing but cheeseburgers. I love cheeseburgers. In fact, I can't wait to finish writing this thing so I can go down the street to The Hamburger Habit and get a Charburger. They're the bomb. This CD is not the bomb. Starflyer 59 takes decent sounding emo lyrics and does horrid things to them. They put in organs and little dubs that reminded me of The Love Boat theme song and not in a good way, either. I know I mentioned in another review that I liked the simplicity and honesty of Little Wings' "Light Green Leaves". The "Can't Stop EP" is just the opposite. The tracks are ponderously slow and pointedly about nothing in particular yet laden with so many studio effects that this album is the equivalent of a summer Hollywood movie full of flashiness yet lacking a soul. None of the five songs held my attention all the way to the end. My favorite aspect of this album (besides the cool truck on the cover, I wish I had a shirt with that picture on it) is the fact that it's only about fifteen minutes long, so that Charburger won't have to wait too much longer.

www.starflyer59.net

Brian Greenaway

Taproot

"Welcome"

(Atlantic)

Widely seen as Taproot's "sellout" album, "Welcome" seldom strays from the repetitive slow-fast, sway-jump Staindish moan and scream formula that seems to be molesting every last inch of cracking skin on the aging body that is popular, American radio rock. "Do you rap and rock? Do you whine about vague clichés like pain and love? You do!! Here's a million dollars. Before you leave, go ahead and stuff your integrity into that putrid, sticky trashcan next to the shitter. Thanks." You've heard this music before. Stephan Richards, who ironically looks in his press photo like he's earnestly looking for a pole to smoke, blatantly rapes the corpses of Layne Staley and Jonathan Davis in an attempt to sound melodic (wait, John Davis isn't dead). And while I do agree with their bio, which claims Taproot's music to flow in the same vein as Linkin (Logs) Park and Papa (insert clever nickname) Roach, I don't see this comparison as a positive. But then again, I'm not reaping the benefits awarded by those fans whose ignorant taste allow bands like Taproot to shovel their regurgitated, banal redundancies down the throats of the masses again and again and again and... The promotional copy of "Welcome" that I received came covered in legal disclaimers prohibiting me from reproducing or sharing this album. Fuck 'em. Produce original music, and I'll respect your artistic license.

www.taprootmusic.com

Winston Smith

The Skulls

"Therapy of the Shy"

(Dr. Strange Records)

The Skulls are back! And one of the bandmembers is picking his nose on the cover of the CD. Hey young punks out there, The Skulls are here to take your scrawny, spikey belted asses to punk school. "Therapy for the Shy" may actually be therapy for the punk impared. Let me explain. There are topics that go back to childhood like the lyrics explain: "Mum thinks I'm building models, Dad knows I'm sniffing glue". Did any of you punks ever buy models to fool your parents into thinking you had a hobby, but actually you were huffing glue? I didn't fuckin' think so. The Skulls move on to tackle relationship issues in the song "Babies" stating, "Shut your mouth girl, don't talk back!" and "I don't need no girl, wanna give her the axe!". The music itself is Cali bar punk at it's finest. Fast, snotty, pissed, and in your face.

If you dig The Stitches or The Smut Peddlers than it's time to go to Skull school. The tuition: Your spikey haired head on a fuckin plate.

www.suburbias.com/skulls

Thom C.

The Templars

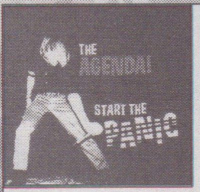
"Return of Jacques De Molay"

(GMM Records)

Sub-par punk on a really bad choice of distortion. A hoarse throat barking out lyrics, that for some reason, seem of a political nature, but I can't follow enough to pick up on anything. The second track hit with such a used guitar progression, it sounded like I was at a junior high talent show, watching some 7th graders try to hold down the progression to 'Louie Louie' and fucking it up. That's the general problem with The Templars, using really really used ideas for musical progressions, recorded in a garage (sez the jacket) and sounding just like that (sez me). That shitty band in the garage next door you wish would just give it up. But they keep playing that one song, over and over (which is really ALL their songs, they just sound like the one shitty song). Used used used. Nope, nothing here I can recommend. The world has plenty of cruddy pseudo-punk bands that wanna be the Clash. The Clash is dead. Officially. Deal.

Davros

The Agenda!



"Start the Panic"

(Kindercore)

Like The Hives? How about The Strokes? Well, there's another mod-core band out there with a singer that sounds more distorted than Charlie Brown's parents and a grooving band that probably knows how to play every song off of Iggy Pop's "Brick by Brick". This five-piece outfit has got a super loose style that naturally fits perfectly with their helter-skelter music. Justin Suicide's vocals are snottier than a kindergartener on Triaminic and compensate the garage/mod (how mod are they? They've got an organist, if that tells you anything) beats served up by the other four yokels. The only problem with The Agenda! is they seem to be getting in on the whole movement a little too late. I don't know if what the world needs right now is another one of these mod-revival bands. People seem to miss the point that the only way you can have a revival is if something sucked in the first place. You don't revive a person who's already alive, you know what I mean? The Agenda! do their thing, shaking their mops, stamping around the stage, swallowing the mic like Mick Jagger and staring off into vacant space like Iggy and I'm sure all the young girls go wild. Still, once this little bubble bursts, what's next? Butt-rock revival? Bobby McFerren-a capella revival? Come on.

www.kindercore.com

Brian Greenaway

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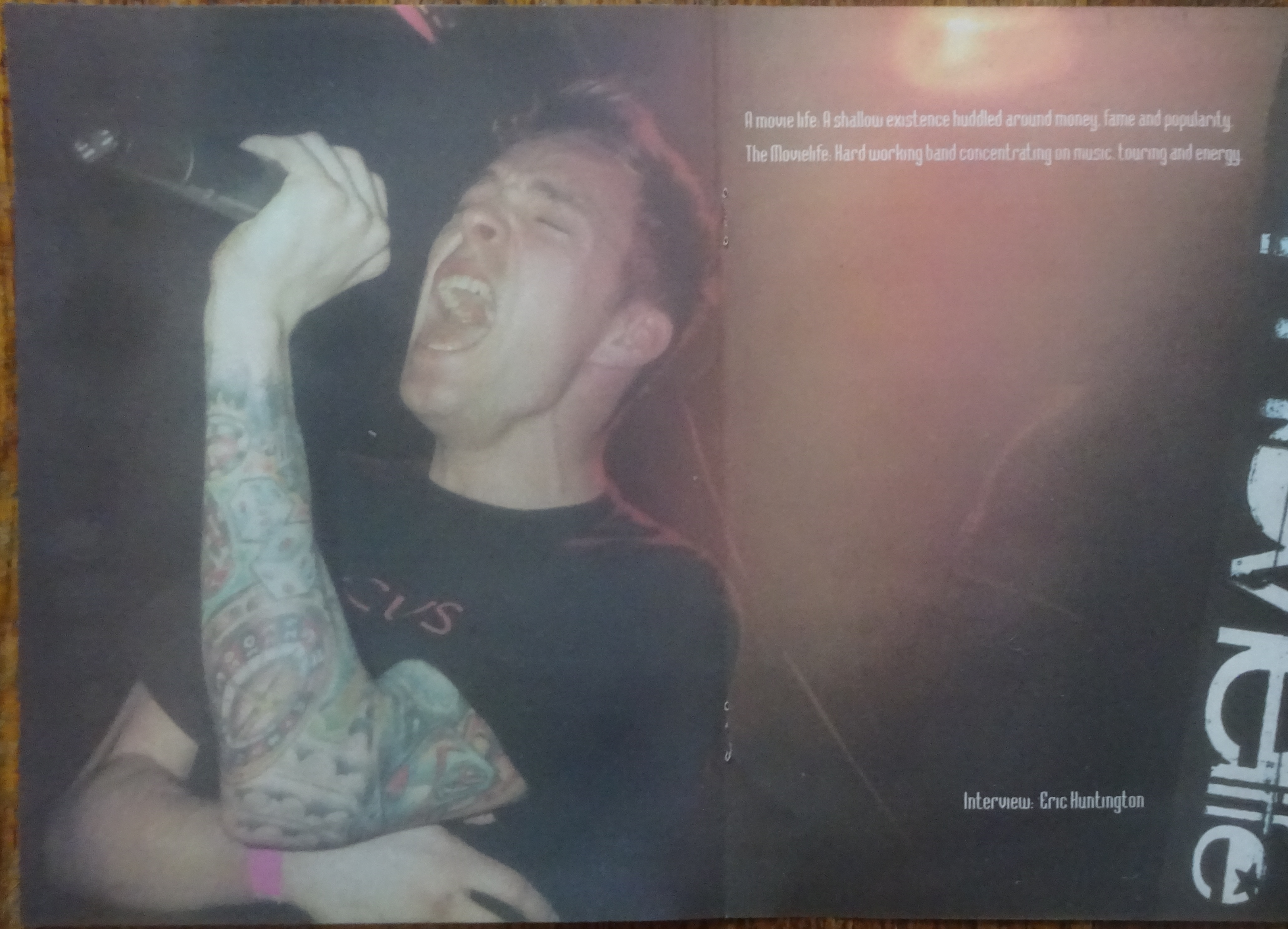

the movielife

A movie life: A shallow existence huddled around money, fame and popularity.

The Movielife: Hard working band concentrating on music, touring and energy.

Interview: Eric Huntington